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Time and Chance

A Romance and
a History : Being
the Story of the
Life of a Man

By

Elbert Hubbard

Author of "Little Journeys," "No Enemy but Himself," etc.



G. P. Putnam's Sons

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I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill, but TIME and CHANCE happeneth to them all.

CONTENTS

BOOK I

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—AN EARLY MORNING WEDDING	3
II.—THE JOURNEY BEGINS	6
III.—A DAY OF INCIDENTS	9
IV.—LITTLE JOHN MAKES A CAPTURE	14
V.—AS TO JEDEDIAH—A DIGRESSION	20
VI.—AN EMERGENCY WELL MET	24
VII.—JOY ABIDETH BUT A DAY	31
VIII.—A VIGIL WITH DEATH	36
IX.—SORROW'S RESPITE FOUND IN WORK	37
X.—CONFORM OR FIGHT	42
XI.—MAN PROPOSES, BUT WOMAN DISPOSES	47
XII.—PIONEER DAYS AND A NIGHT ALONE IN THE WOODS	52

BOOK II

I.—A CATTLE SALE AT ZANESVILLE	61
II.—JOHN BROWN FINDS FRIENDS AND FOES	65
III.—OLD BLACKFOOT FOILS AN AMBUSCADE	76
IV.—THE DEACON DOES A-WOOING GO	83
V.—JOHN MEETS TROUBLE, AND FACES IT	90
VI.—A LITERARY COURTSHIP	98
VII.—A HORSE-BACK RIDE THROUGH THE WOODS	106
VIII.—THE RIDE EVOLVES INTO A HORSE-RACE	110
IX.—THE WINNER WINS A HORSE AND FREEDOM	115
X.—MORE RUNAWAYS ARRIVE	123

CHAPTER	PAGE
XI.—THE SLAVES RETAKEN, WITH ONE WHITE MAN OVER .	128
XII.—JOHN AND JIM MAKE A HASTY DEPARTURE . . .	136
XIII.—VACANT PLACES, YET THE OLD WORLD GOES ON . .	140
XIV.—EXPLOITING THE PUBLIC AND PROSPERITY . . .	144
XV.—QUIETING QUALMS, AND MORE ADVENTURE . . .	153
XVI.—TRAGEDY CAMPS ON THEIR TRAIL	161
XVII.—THE DESTINATION REACHED AT LAST	166
XVIII.—DISTURBING NEWS FROM ZANESVILLE	173
XIX.—OH ! THE WEARINESS OF WAITING !	179
XX.—JIM SLIVERS DISAPPEARS	187
XXI.—A FRUITLESS CHASE	189
XXII.—SLAVE-STEALING AND HORSE-STEALING	193
XXIII.—DEFEAT AND DOUBT BUT NOT DISCOURAGEMENT . .	196
XXIV.—HOT HOPES FADE OFF INTO MIST	201
XXV.—MUCH EFFORT—EXPERIENCE A NET RESULT	209
XXVI.—IN THE GRASP OF FATE	217
XXVII.—A PROPOSAL	223

BOOK III

I.—SO RUNS THE WORLD AWAY—A LETTER	229
II.—THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAY	235
III.—JIM SLIVERS RECOUNTS HISTORY	240
IV.—A NIGHT-RIDE TO FREEDOM	248
V.—TROUBLE IN THE CHURCH	256
VI.—NOTHING CAN BE CONCEALED LONG	263
VII.—DISGRACE FACED BY FRANKNESS	267
VIII.—“ NIGGER STEALER ! NIGGER STEALER ! ”	274
IX.—RESULTS OF MIXING SENTIMENT AND BUSINESS . . .	278

BOOK IV

I.—KANSAS IN THE FIFTIES	285
II.—POLITICS AND STRIFE	294
III.—CAUGHT IN A TRAP !	299
IV.—JOHN BROWN TO THE RESCUE	305

Contents

vii

CHAPTER

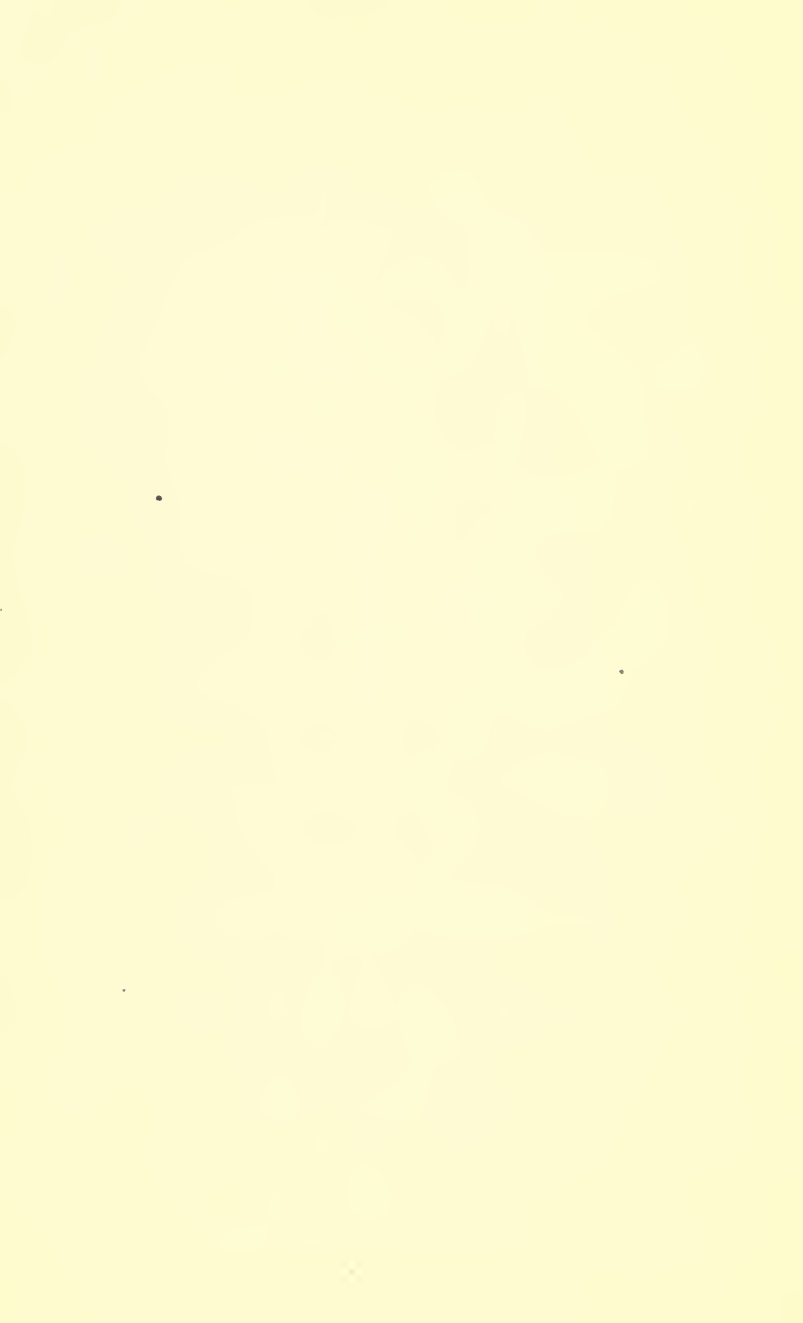
PAGE

V.—A LITTLE MATTER OF DIPLOMACY	311
VI.—A SHERIFF INTERVIEWED	316
VII.—THE BAPTISM OF BLOOD	322
VIII.—DIPLOMACY SUPPLEMENTED BY FORTY-FOUR	330
IX.—MASKED PEACE AND SMOTHERED EMBERS	336
X.—WOMANHOOD AND CHILDHOOD NOT EXEMPT	341
XI.—SURVEYING THE TERRITORY	343
XII.—JIM SLIVERS AND DEATH WITHOUT WARNING	349
XIII.—THE SOIL OF KANSAS FERTILIZED BY BLOOD	353
XIV.—JOHN BROWN AND UNCLE SAM PARLEY	356
XV.—LOVE EVER FIGHTS FOR FREEDOM	363
XVI.—CAPTAIN CARVER HOLDS A RECEPTION	370

BOOK V

I.—FORCE, FANATICISM AND SENTIMENT	379
II.—THE PLANS ARE BEING PERFECTED	383
III.—THE PLAN EXPLAINED	393
IV.—KINSMEN ONLY IN NAME	398
V.—TRANSCENDENTALISM AND "BEECHER BIBLES"	403
VI.—THE TIME IS SHORT !	410
VII.—AN OLD FRIEND WORKS A SPELL	414
VIII.—THE PLANS HASTENED	422
IX.—THE BLOW IS STRUCK	426
X.—" I AM READY ! "	432

BOOK ONE



CHAPTER I

AN EARLY MORNING WEDDING

IN the northeastern corner of the State of Ohio is a little space of territory, about sixty-five miles square, known as the Western Reserve.

In Congressional proceedings, especially when the tariff is up for discussion, one hears much of this little tract. On questions of wool and dairy products it seems as though nothing can be done without consulting the people of the Western Reserve, and the rate on steel rails cannot be safely raised or lowered until this peculiar people has been interviewed.

And when one considers the fact that this little corner has supplied one president, several statesmen, and the man who, Victor Hugo says, precipitated the Civil War, it does seem as if the Western Reserve wielded an influence quite out of proportion to its insignificant dimensions.

In the year 1800 all that vast territory west of Pennsylvania and north of the Ohio River, stretching through to the Mississippi, was known as the Northwestern Territory.

Certain States, that had supplied a contingent of soldiers to clear this region of the French and hostile Indians, made claim to the soil, and there seemed danger that serious differences would arise. But to adjust matters the several States relinquished their claims in favor of the General Government: Virginia reserving a small

strip on the Ohio River for military purposes, and Connecticut, putting forth a like excuse, keeping the tract known as the Western Reserve.

Not needing the land for her soldiery, Connecticut with characteristic thrift offered it for sale. And so it was divided into farms, and many hardy, restless men of the "Nutmeg State," on whom civilization was pressing too heavily, packed up their earthly possessions and hastened as fast as ox-cart could go to this new Canaan.

Of course, the men did not go alone: only gamblers, speculators, pirates, tramps and clubmen think of defeating Deity by leaving women behind.

In those days Nature had her way; and when, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and five, Nathan Crosby, of Torrington, proposed going to the Western Reserve, his affianced wife, Ruth Halsted, spoke in the words of that other Ruth of long, long ago, and said: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

The bans had already been posted at the church door. The marriage day had been arranged for a month later, but was hastened a little; for Owen Brown and his family, who lived in the third house across the creek, were soon to start west; and the Judson family were going with them.

Nathan Crosby was twenty-two, tall, slender, lithe and brown. Ruth was nineteen, with rosy cheeks, laughing eyes and ringlets that stole out from under the sober sun-bonnet in a very venturesome way.

Nathan's patrimony was a fine team of young steers; the cart was the work of his own hands, fashioned,

molded, bent and hewn into shape at odd hours, scattered over three years' time.

The bride's dower consisted of five quilts, a bolt of homespun linen, certain yards of linsey woolsey and three hickory chairs.

The day for the wedding was set. The day came—bright, clear and warm, as becomes a May-day. And although the hour of nine in the morning was an unusual one for a marriage feast, yet even before eight o'clock there were horses tied to every tree along the road in front of Hiram Halsted's house, and numerous ox-carts that looked as if they might have come from a distance blocked the way; for the patient bearers of burdens that drew these carts were lying down chewing the cud of reverie.

There were men sitting on the front fence whittling sticks, and men on the stoop, and men lying on the grass; and about the back door, and among the white-covered tables spread under the trees, women fluttered nervously back and forth. And there were children, children everywhere; children of all sizes, ages and complexions, and some of the women who lingered about the tables, adding a touch here and there, carried babies in their arms.

All were dressed in their "other clothes" and all were, therefore, a bit uncomfortable; and the conversation was in a lowered tone as if 't were a funeral instead of a wedding. The bees buzzed solemnly in the locusts and the summer winds sighed softly through the trees, but now and again a baby spoke up loud and clear as babies will.

Then there came a sudden hush, and the men on the fence slid off their perches and shut their knives with a quick snap; they pulled off their hats and some removed large chews of tobacco. Those on the grass stood up.

The women who had fluttered about the back door now stood around the front; the babies were quiet, the children frightened. In the midst of this expectant stillness, when every heart beat fast, Nathan Crosby and Ruth Halsted walked out upon the little porch arm in arm. They stood so that all the company in the yard could see them, and the white-haired old minister read the marriage service and then all the people heard his concluding words: "And I do now pronounce you man and wife."

Then there was a prayer, a hymn was sung, and the people laughed and shook hands with each other and crowded around to salute the bride. The babies raised their voices, the bees hummed louder than ever, birds sang in the tall poplars, and the women moved back and forth from kitchen to tables in laughing haste.

Soon the bride and groom were ushered to places at the head of one of the long tables, and the rest of the seats were quickly filled. The old preacher said grace, and the white petals from the apple blossoms fell like snow as the summer wind blew softly from the south.

CHAPTER II

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

NATHAN and Ruth did not eat much; they only made pretense, and merely tasted the food that the women piled upon their plates.

They were watching the young men who were so busily loading the canvas-covered ox-cart that stood out by the front gate. Into the cart went the three hickory chairs and the five bed-quilts; then more hickory chairs and more bed-quilts, that had been brought by aunts and uncles

from up the creek. And aunts and uncles from down the creek had brought bags of beans and potatoes and corn. And neighbors had contributed hams and dried beef, and the miller had sent a hundred pounds of meal. Then there were rolling pins, and potato mashers, and butter ladles, and wooden spoons, and more articles whittled out from trees than anyone ever saw outside of the State of Connecticut.

And Nathan and Ruth saw all these things being packed away in their own cart—the cart that Nathan had made and fashioned with his own hands—the cart that Ruth had come to see, and admired as the young man worked at it. It was “*our*” cart and those were “*our*” things, and they clasped hands beneath the table, and tears filled their eyes, and the women rallied them on loss of appetite and the men laughed loudly as the jest went round.

But now something else caught the attention of the assemblage: an enormous wagon drawn by four oxen, with three carts behind, all followed by half a dozen cows and twice as many sheep, driven by several boys, some of whom rode horses and colts.

“It’s the Browns and the Judsons starting west,” said one whittler to another.

And Mr. and Mrs. Brown and Mr. and Mrs. Judson arose hastily from the table and began calling to several small, rosy-faced, barefoot Browns and Judsons.

The caravan stopped in the road in front of the Halsted cottage and then there was much kissing and handshaking. The women wept and wiped their eyes on their big check aprons, and all the babies cried, and the dogs barked, and the bees buzzed discordantly as the wind made mournful music through the trees, and a robin called anxiously for his mate from the top of the tallest poplar.

Sundry little Judsons were packed away on top o' the household goods in the carts and wagon; various Browns were distributed likewise, while other Browns in jeans, and Judsons in linsey woolsey got permission to follow behind and drive the sheep. Mrs. Brown sat on the seat of the big wagon holding a baby, and by her side was another, with nose out of joint, scarcely two years old. And so amid a shout of good-byes and God-bless-yous, there was a flourish of ox goads, and the creaking cavalcade started slowly away.

"Oh, stop, please—one moment! where is John? has anyone seen my little John?" cried Mrs. Brown from out the depths of her black sun-bonnet.

"Oh, he's all safe! Ruth Halsted—I mean my wife—has him!" called tall Nathan Crosby from where he walked by the side of the young steers.

"Who did you say?" laughed a stout man.

"Land sakes!—he's learnin' quick!" said an elderly woman.

But Nathan only looked back at the high seat where Ruth sat smiling, crying, and blushing with her arm around a slender, yellow-haired little five-year-old boy. A sickly, sedate, blue-eyed boy who thought and thought when he should have played; who had been born into one of those great big old-time families, when babies were fashionable, and where there was not always quite love enough to go 'round, and no time to manifest it even if there had been.

And so this young woman, whose heart was so overflowing with affection, smoothed the shock of tawny hair and held the lad close to her side.

The caravan moved slowly up the village street, across the old wooden bridge, where there was notice of a fine for him who drove faster than a walk, on up the valley.

And the oxen pushed and clashed horn against horn, and the children from the village, who had trooped behind, began to drop back, and finally only the Browns and the Judsons and the Crosbys were left; they and their cattle and their babies and their flocks.

The sun was beating down hot and the stony road was dry and dusty.

"Ruth, Ruth Halsted, where are we going?" asked the little yellow boy in childish treble.

"We are going to the Western Reserve, John."

"And will we get there to-night?"

"No, dear little boy, not to-night, nor to-morrow night, nor the next, nor in a week—it may take us three months—you are not sorry, though, are you?"

"No—no, I don't care how long it takes if I can be with you!" said the boy. The bride of an hour kissed the little yellow boy and laid his tired head in her lap.

And the boy slept; and Nathan Crosby, tall, lithe, and bronzed looked up and smiled and smiled.

CHAPTER III

A DAY OF INCIDENTS

"WE 'LL make a big march this first day—the cattle will drive better after we get 'em good and tired."

"That 's so, Captain Judson, I guess they will," answered Deacon Brown.

The big wagon and the four carts had been driven into a stream—wide, shallow, and rock-bottomed. The oxen drank with great deliberation, and as the vehicles stood

there side by side, the cool water gurgling through the spokes, little John Brown awoke with a start.

“ Oh, Ruth, it is n't a Noah's flood, is it ? ”

“ No, dear, it 's only Timber Creek—we have come six miles! ”

“ Your baby is pretty cute, Mister Crosby,” called the oldest Judson boy, Jedediah by name, a freckled youth of twenty, who was too big for a boy and not yet a man. He rode his horse into the stream and stopped opposite the young steers—“ O Judas! ” he suddenly shouted—his horse was lying down with him in the stream. He sprang off into the water, which was over his boot tops, and gave a kick at the colt that had gone down in a way that gave the blanket, that served for a saddle, a complete wetting.

The women and children sent up a shout of laughter and even old Captain Judson chuckled.

“ Yes, the boy *is* rather cute, thank 'ee,” answered Nathan.

The colt sprang up, shook the water from his hide, and made a bound for the opposite shore. The rope ran through the young man's hands—he clutched at the knot at the end, and it drew him forward one big stride. His feet slipped on the flat stones and then shot up above the water and down went the youth with a ker-splash.

Then there was applause and more laughter.

“ Yes, our baby is all right; how 's your eldest, sister Judson ? ”

“ He always did believe in immersion! ” answered the father.

“ Now, Pa, we should not speak lightly of sacred things,” spoke the woman in mild rebuke.

“ Nothin' very sacred about Jed's losing a little of his dignity—is there, Deacon Brown ? ”

“ It won’t hurt the boy—Satan gets us all by the heels at times, and pride must have a fall.”

The sheep had come up by this time and stood irresolute, bleating on the shore. A boy seized a black-faced lamb in his arms and began wading across, the mother anxiously followed after her woolly offspring, and the rest of the sheep straggled along behind.

“ Here, Joe, take this gourd and milk a pint from the red cow—the baby ’s hungry!” Why the red cow should be milked for the benefit of the baby, that was at that very instant intent on satisfying hunger, would not have been apparent to an outsider. But there was “ the baby ” and “ the little baby.”

The baby depended on the red cow, but the little baby knew a scheme worth two o’ that, as it nosed under the homespun shawl.

So the gourd was duly brought by a ruddy lad with trousers rolled to his thighs, who evidently believed in immersion, too, for he would not have cared had he been wet all over.

“ Go ’way, you rascal, don’t you splash us,” shouted Nathan, who was now sitting up on the seat by the side of his wife and little John.

“ Well, here we go—Gee, Buck! you Bright!” and away they went up the bank with a crack of whip and sing-song creak of the great awkward carts as they followed one after another.

Jedediah had caught his horse and stood very bedraggled on a rock wringing his coat.

“ I say, Captain Judson, how ’s your baby ? ” called Nathan as he swung past and pointed at the picture.

And so they moved on to the west and the day wore away; the sun was sending out long shadows towards Torrington, but Torrington was fifteen miles behind and

only two out of all that cavalcade of twenty souls were ever to see the smiling village again.

Another mile and the road skirted a brook that ran dancing and singing over the pebbles. Just across was a stretch of bottom-land where the grass grew lusty, dewy and fragrant.

Captain Judson called "Here we raise our Ebenezer!" Someone started a hymn and the vehicles hauled out under a little grove of lofty pines that grew by the brook-side. The boys with the cattle had lagged behind, but now they raised a shout and came forward on a run, and their clamor made more than one verse of the hymn out of the question.

Quickly the oxen were unyoked, the horses unsaddled; the cattle drank lazily from the stream, and the horses rolled on the grass as if in glee that the day's work was done.

The boys had been promised that they could fish, and they were not slow in turning over flat stones and rotting logs looking for bait.

The little children were helped out of the wagons and the women climbed down by themselves, all save Ruth, who was tenderly assisted.

And while the men got wood and brush for a fire, the women laid blankets on the grass for the babies to lie on, and were getting out pans and kettles for cooking.

The sun had set in a burst of golden glory behind the great, green hills; and the air was now cool, so the crackling fire added a cheer and a hope to our homeless friends—a cheer that comes with genial warmth and a hope of supper.

The kettle was soon singing over the coals from where it hung over the improvised crane, the bacon was sputtering in the spider, potatoes were roasting in the ashes,

and the coffee made from parched corn was sending out its fragrant aroma. The red cow had supplied her contribution, and the boys and girls who had wandered off up and down the creek, fishing, were called, and after Deacon Brown had said a short grace, business began. The women waited on the children first, and everything was in common. There was neither mine, nor thine, but all was ours.

And how they did eat!

The children talked and jabbered (for even Puritan children jabber, else they wither and die) and told of the things they saw, and of the things that they intended to do, and all the time they ate. And the fond parents smiled, and Nathan and Ruth sat on a bowlder, eating from one plate, and little John sat at their feet. Once he looked up and said: "Ruth."

"Yes, John."

"Is n't it fun?"

"Indeed it is!"

"Are n't you glad we 're here?"

"Yes, John, I 'm very glad."

Off to the east a big yellow star arose, and then more stars peeped forth one by one, and the dusk gathered, and the great green hill turned to a purple mound that lifted itself a giant shadow against the sky. Brush was heaped on the smouldering fire, and then the women tucked up their dresses and washed the dishes in the brook. The babies lying on the spread-out blankets were asleep. Boxes and packages were taken out of the carts and wagons so as to make up beds, and sleepy children were lifted off the ground and bundled away here and there under the big canvas-covered tops. Several of the horses and oxen were hobbled, the dogs were turned loose, more wood was piled on the fire, and all lay down

to rest. From a pond a mile away came the solemn croak of frogs, whip-poor-wills called, the distant screech of an owl was heard, and all the time the brook sang its ceaseless lullaby of rhythmic song. June bugs buzzed and bumped along the dark, the night wind sighed softly thro' the pines, and as the stars kept guard tired nature slept.

CHAPTER IV

LITTLE JOHN MAKES A CAPTURE

BIRDS and babies go to sleep at sundown, and, like Solomon's ideal woman, arise while yet it is night.

The ecstasy of forest birds at the first flush of summer day-dawn is a thing to remember long. But to hide their song away in your heart so that you shall keep it forever and a day, you must have heard it in childhood. For then hope beat high, and a belief in the celestial, the mystical, and the miraculous was a living thing like the song-birds themselves; then you never doubted that the magic potency of the thyrsus would yet be yours, and at the waving of your wand spirits would start, and men would do your bidding.

Or—well, yes—if you hear those wild notes of unseen songsters just when the first flush of pink comes into the east, and as the shadows flee away, and you are on your wedding journey, perhaps then you will hold them deathless long after great things are forgot; just as men win fortunes and kingdoms, and gamble them away, and yet keep hidden in sacred nooks faded bits of ribbon and tatters of lace.

Before sunrise, even as jocund day stood tiptoe on the mountain top, the camp was astir. The fire was crackling merrily, the children were washing their hands and

faces in the stream, and those too small, or without the necessary ambition to perform their own ablutions, were having the task done for them, not o'er gently, but kindly. Two older boys were cleaning fish and a big girl, called Sis, was rolling the brook trout in cornmeal.

Great heaps of white mist went reeling up the distant hillside like bacchantes of the night hieing them home from the dance. The dew hung in beads on the grass blades and leaves. Soon the sun's rays fell over all and turned the pearly beads to diamonds and showed great stretches of gauzy lace-stuff where busy spiders had spun their webs: sending out into the darkness filament after filament—swaying out into the unknown until somewhere they held fast, and the morning sun made all plain.

When breakfast was ready, a blast was blown on a horn. There was a quick gathering of the clans; and about the fire savory things steamed and even the elder children, intent on fishing, came trooping in from the underbrush.

"Don't let Jed pray, he's too long-winded—everything 'll get cold," whispered Mrs. Brown as she plucked the Deacon by the sleeve.

The Deacon might have chided this mixing of material and spiritual things in one breath, but he prided himself on his prayers, so he only half smiled and lifting his voice to its best meetin'-house tone announced: "Number one sixty-nine—long metre—

" ' Now doth the sun ascend the sky,
And wake creation with its ray :
Keep us from sin, O Lord most high,
Through all the actions of the day '

—Sing !"

And so they sang, loud, clear and sincere; the tree-tops answered it back, and a blue-jay on an overhanging

limb sneered in disrespectful chatter. Mrs. Judson's high-pitched falsetto shot up above the sound waves like a sharp church steeple out of a grove.

The Deacon lined off the hymn just as if even the babies could not coo the well known words; and so they sang there under the pines as the brook went singing a little purring love song of its own. Then a prayer, deep, earnest and heartfelt, was said, and before the echo of the amen was heard the women were filling the wooden plates of the impatient children.

"Mercy me!" said Mrs. Judson, "mercy me! Ruth Halsted, I thought brides allus looked after their husbands close—I did mine. So you don't know where he is gone to?"

"Why, Nathan is not far, he and little John strolled down the creek after cowslips."

"It 's too late for greens," jerked Mrs. Judson.

"They did not want cowslips for greens—they were going to get blossoms for me."

"O ho! and in a month you 'll have to split your own wood—that 's just the way of the men."

Ruth did not answer, and so Jedediah chinked in the space by drawling: "Methinks it would have showed a better spirit if Nathan had been here to prayers—pass the Johnnie-cake, Sis."

Ruth took up the horn that lay on a flat stone.

Jedediah took a big mouthful of Johnnie-cake and said:

"To absent —"

Ruth pursed her pretty lips and blew a too-whoooo-too-whoooo! Her cheeks grew red, and as she paused for breath Jedediah continued: "ourselves from—"

"Whoooo-too-too-whoooo!"

"public prayers—"

“ Too-too-whooo-whooo!”

“ is evil—”

“ Whoooo!”

“ in the sight of the Lord!”

The words came out with a roar clear above the sound of the horn.

An answering shout was heard from the dingle.

“ I ’ll go and find them,” said Ruth, and she tripped away.

“ You ’d better stay and eat your breakfuss;” but Ruth had disappeared among the alders.

“ She ’s a fine young woman!” said Deacon Brown.

“ But worldly minded,” said Mrs. Judson.

“ Well, a leetle that way, perhaps.”

In five minutes the alders shook, then parted, and Nathan and Ruth stepped forth, arm in arm, followed by little John, who was hugging something very closely in his arms.

“ I ’ve got it—I have!” cried the child, and his dark blue eyes shone with delight.

“ Got something! Land sakes!” cried his mother, “ yes, you ’ve got your hand all scratched some way—dear me! let that thing go at once—what is it, anyway?”

“ Only a squirrel,” laughed Nathan, as the boy took his prize around for each to admire.

“ Throw it away—he ’s bit you already—do you hear me?” and the mother with a babe at her breast made a threatening motion toward little John, who backed away holding the half-grown squirrel tighter than ever.

“ Oh, now, Mother!” said the Deacon.

“ I know,” cried Ruth, “ I know what we ’ll do. I have a basket that will just make a nest for it. We will weave bark over the top for a cover—”

“ That ’s what we ’ll do,” said Nathan, and he reached

a long arm into the ox-cart and brought forth a splint basket that was among the wedding presents.

"Why did you let him get scratched so, Nathan? you can't be trusted with children," said the mother, not quite mollified.

"He chased the squirrel and I chased him. He is so little that I lost him in the brush till all at once I heard him shout, 'I've got it, I've got it!' And when I had pushed through the bushes I found he had not only got the squirrel, but the squirrel had got him—by the hand with its teeth; and the more the squirrel fought and scratched, the more he held on, until I showed him how to hold it by the scruff of the neck."

"Land sakes! How his hand do bleed—did n't he cry?"

"That boy? not he—he is n't that kind. When he gets hold of a thing he sticks."

"May he ever cling to that which is righteous," said Deacon Brown.

"Amen and amen!" solemnly said Jedediah.

And so they ate breakfast there in the bright, warm sunshine, and Ruth wove willow twigs, lacing them back and forth into a cover for the basket, and tall Nathan laughed and laughed and put delicious morsels of brook trout first into Ruth's mouth and then into little John's; for John had to hold his squirrel and Ruth had to weave, so Nathan fed them both, and fed himself besides, and made sundry frivolous remarks.

Across the creek in the clearing where the grass grew lush, and the warm sun fell, the sheep and the oxen having eaten their fill, were all lying down.

"It's a shame to trouble 'em, but we've got to, I s'pose," said Captain Judson.

"Yes, a voice says, 'Arise and get thee hence,'" remarked Jedediah.

And as the men yoked the oxen, and the boys saddled their horses, the women packed the bedding away and piled in the furniture. The fire was put out and Captain Judson made a last survey for articles that might be left. Nathan put his arm around his wife's waist and helped her up on the seat. Then with an, "upsy daisy," he swung little John up after, his squirrel basket tightly in his hand.

"Ruth!"

"Yes, John."

"Don't you wish we could stay here?"

"All the time?"

"Yes, just you and me and Nathan and Bob."

"And who is Bob?"

"Why, don't you know, he's my squirrel?"

"Nathan, did you hear what the boy said?" smilingly asked the blooming young woman.

"Yes, dear one, I heard what he said,—'just you and me and Bob and John,'—I wish we could stay." But the strong young man did not smile; he was thinking.

"Forward march!" shouted Captain Judson.

The four oxen started with a jerk: the links of the big chain rattled, tightened, and the wagon moved. The carts fell in behind; the cows mooed and lumbered after. Two small Browns and a Judson rode the red cow; the sheep huddled into the road and the boys on horseback brought up the rear.

"Start some familiar hymn," called the Captain.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,"

announced the Deacon, and all sang with a will.

And back under the pines the brook still sang the soothing little love ditty of its own. At least that was what Nathan and Ruth thought.

CHAPTER V

AS TO JEDEDIAH—A DIGRESSION

CAPTAIN JUDSON was in command of the little caravan, as a matter of course; for he had led a company of volunteer soldiers through to the Northwestern Territory eight years before. They went to fight the French and Indians. But they could n't find the French; and the Indians did not find them, so there was no blood shed. Yet Captain Judson came back to Torrington covered with renown; and like the messengers of old who were sent forth to spy out the land, he returned and reported favorably. He brought back no bunches of grapes swung on poles and carried on the brawny shoulders of strong men, but his report was as glowing as a sunset at sea and as beautiful as a rainbow touched by a dream.

Captain Judson wore a rusty gilt cord around his hat as a hint of authority and a reminder of the stirring scenes that he had known in the imminent deadly breach. Good Deacon Brown did not much admire that cord—it savored of pomp and worldly lust. Of course, he said nothing, but his wife knew what was in his heart, as the wife of a man's bosom always does; and she eased the Deacon's soul, as she might have scratched his back in a place that he could not reach, by saying confidentially:

“Captain Judson is a worthy man and means well, but his ancestors did not come over in the Mayflower: they were only sailors.”

And the Deacon softly chided her woman's tongue, as was meet.

Jedediah Judson was the first child of his parents. They were religious people—were the Judsons—which is rather a needless remark when we consider that in those

days Connecticut had a state religion and those who did not profess it were veritable Pariahs.

Religious persecution had driven the forefathers of these people from the Old World. They had endured all—had given all for what they believed to be truth; and, if need be, their children were quite willing to repeat the process. And when they sang, "Religion is the chief concern of mortals here below," they expressed an idea that was mortised and riveted into the very granite of their natures.

Jedediah was squat and freckled; he had bright red hair that was somewhat curly, and china blue eyes. He was precocious in babyhood, and "sassy" in youth, and as he was "likely" his mother had set him apart for the ministry. He was not the son of a Levite, to be sure, but then her grandfather had been a preacher, and that her first-born should be a preacher too—what nobler ambition? When the youngster could scarcely lisp, his fond mother would stand him in a chair and ask:

"What's muzzer's boy going to be when he gets a great big man?"

And the baby would say:

"Preacher!"

Then he was taught to recite pieces and say verses and sing tunes, when there was company, and all would laugh and approve by knowing nods. This performance was gone through whenever neighbors called and was never omitted when the minister came.

And the boy grew and waxed strong.

This was rather a source of sorrow to his mother than otherwise, for that the ideal minister should be sickly none doubted: to be weak proved that he was not of the earth, and the probability that he might fly hence at any time gave a serious import to his words that caused cold

streaks to shoot up the spines of the scoffers who sat on the back seats. The pale man with a hollow cough was near to God; and how could we reach God excepting through death?

Then physical weakness was fit excuse for not engaging in manual labor. But even handicapped with health, Jedediah clung to the idea that he "had a call," and his mother constantly braced the thought for him. And as for Captain Judson, he was half proud and half ashamed of it. For Captain Judson was of a dual nature: one in whom the glamour of militia and the love of religion ruled in turn, and at times these spirits struggled for the mastery. And so he compromised by calling himself a Fighting Christian, but the real fact was that he was not much of a fighter nor a very good Christian. But then no man has ever yet been able to label and pigeon-hole himself aright.

Captain Judson hoped for a military boy, and therefore took small satisfaction in his preacher son. And so whenever the youth led in prayer, or lifted a hymn, or opened the Bible at random and read the message, the Captain squirmed and grew first hot, then cold. But all this time Mrs. Judson looked on with deep, motherly pride and a hearty sense of satisfaction in the fact that she had been chosen to bear a son whose office it was to snatch souls from the burning.

All by himself, unknown to a single soul, Captain Judson had decided that if worst came to worst, and a fight were on, he would put Nathan Crosby second in command with orders to take full charge if he (Captain Judson) should fall. "But then the dangers are few, and so prayers may answer," mused the Captain.

Nathan Crosby was only a year older than Jedediah and was not half so smart, folks said. Jedediah had been away to school, had been in Boston and once in New

Haven, and he had lived a whole year in a preacher's family studying theology. Just as we now demand that the fledgling lawyers shall begin their career by studying in a lawyer's office, and as we refuse a diploma to a doctor who has not studied with a practitioner, so the former method was to have the coming shepherd of a flock apprenticed to a preacher.

Nathan had the dignity that comes from absence of effort and freedom from pretense. He was usually sedate and talked but little; while Jedediah talked much. Nathan could take the long rifle and shoot a squirrel from the top of the tallest tree, without a rest, while Jedediah was "gun shy."

Nathan could ride wild horses, break steers, and climb higher at a raising than anyone else, yet he had never made a profession of religion. In fact, he never said anything about it one way or the other. He was as ignorant of his "inward state" as he was of his digestion.

But the fact that he had not "professed" caused the good villagers to look at him askance and shake their heads dubiously at the thought of so fine a girl as Ruth Halsted marrying an ungodly man.

The risk of this proceeding had impressed itself even on Jedediah Judson, and as he had the happiness of humanity at heart, he spoke to Ruth about it only a fortnight before the wedding. But what her answer was no one knew but Jedediah, and he never told. He, however, had remarked to a neighbor that no one in all Torrington needed the grace of God in his heart more than Ruth Halsted.

CHAPTER VI

AN EMERGENCY WELL MET

AND so the Judsons and the Browns and the Crosbys, advance ripples of the tide of Empire, went slowly rolling and bowling to the west. They followed the winding roadway through the valleys, where tall green hills arose on either side; they crossed cooling streams, and curious bridges, the pieces all pegged together without the sign of a nail.

They passed by stately silent forests, and moved through villages where all the people came out and stared,—some wishing them God-speed. And sometimes they stopped for an hour or so at log houses by the way. And then the women would go in and compare babies and exchange little confidences; and the men would talk about the crops and the hard times there in the East where the pressure of modern ways bore heavily. And when they would pass on they would be given garden truck, and sage, sassafras or thoroughwort to make tea for the children, if they chanced to get sick. Then the oxen would be urged forward and the women would wave aprons as a last salute. At night they would camp near a stream where the picking was good, for the animals must have food and water. Sometimes it rained and one spell it was cloudy and drizzly for three days. The children that drove the sheep got wet and cold and some of them cried a bit, and the sheep bleated mournfully and the cows mooed as if they were homesick; and once when Jedediah started a hymn he had to sing it all alone by himself.

Little John's yellow cheeks had changed to blue and his teeth chattered, but he held tight to the squirrel bas-

ket and quite protested when Nathan showed him how to suspend it from the hickory center-stick that ran over the bows. But finally he hung the basket up and lay back on a bear-skin that Ruth tucked tenderly around him. They ate a cold supper that night, for no dry wood could be found.

“ Is it goin’ to be a Noah’s flood, Ruth ? ”

“ No, dear little boy, the rain is needed to make the crops grow—the sun will be out to-morrow ! ”

“ But you said that yesterday ! ”

“ Did I ? well, I was mistaken—but wait until to-morrow and you ’ll see.”

And Ruth was right; for the next morning the sun came out, and came out, and came out, and the sky was so blue as never was.

They had passed out of New England and were in “ York State ”: the children had expected a great change but things looked about the same.

“ Only a little way and we reach the mighty Hudson,” shouted Captain Judson, as the march was again taken up.

The same morning at ten o’clock, from the top of a high hill, they saw the wide expanse of the Hudson River. From here the way was down grade, like the road to perdition, explained Deacon Brown; yet all were very merry, for it looked as if they were getting almost to the journey’s end—they were making head anyway. And this was a point that the children had begun to question.

The road led down to the ferry landing.

The ferry was simply a flat boat with a high railing around the sides like a fence. It was propelled by poles and one big sculling oar at the stern. The approach to the boat was by a platform on hinges that was raised and lowered by a windlass.

“ The craft ’s hardly big enough for two carts—it will take several trips to set us all over,” said Captain Judson, as they approached.

Two men sat on the fence rail of the boat smoking. They showed a dull indifference to the approaching emigrants.

They returned Captain Judson’s cheery hail with mere grunts and made no motion to lower the drawbridge.

“ This be the ferry, neighbor, I guess,” called Deacon Brown as they came to a halt.

“ Yes, old man, you guessed it the first time—want to go over ? ”

“ Certainly we do—we are bound for the Western Reserve.”

“ Wall, haste makes waste, as the old sayin’ is: don’t git in a sweat, and we ’ll git you over—there ’s a hell of a lot o’ you, though ! ”

“ Your language is not the best, brother, but there is quite a company of us and the quicker we begin operations the better.”

“ Wall, you can’t be too quick for us ! ”

“ Oh, you mean about the pay ? ”

“ Slightly—we don’t keep this ’ere ferry for our health.”

“ Surely not—how much is it ? a shilling apiece for the carts and two shillings for the wagon, a settler told us a few miles back—then there ’s the sheep and cows extra, of course —”

“ A shilling apiece for ferryin’ a cart ? hear him, Bill ! ”

The two men had come down on shore now and were smoking and whittling.

Bill laughed a guffaw, swore, spat, and guffawed again. Bill was dark-whiskered, dirty, small, and bow-legged.

His companion was younger, and had a shade more intelligence; he was tall, awkward, and shambling, and his little black eyes twinkled with amusement when he repeated:

“ A shillin’ a cart! ! ”

The two ferrymen climbed back on their boat and again perched on the rail. They filled their pipes afresh and smoked with the calm deliberation and peace that a sense of monopoly always gives. Godliness with contentment is great gain, but a monopoly of a good thing will answer most purposes.

“ You talk to ’em,” nudged Captain Judson to Nathan.

“ No, let the Deacon be spokesman.”

“ Look you, brother,” called the Deacon, “ will you answer a question fair and honest ? ”

“ Wall, we are allus fair and generally honest in all our dealin’s, haint we, Bill ? ”

Bill guffawed.

“ Tell me, do you ferry carts over for a shilling each ? ”

“ Not yourn! ”

“ Answer yes or no.”

“ Wall, yes.”

“ And if you take others over for that price, why not us ? ”

“ Now, old man, be reasonable; this ferry is ourn; folks that live around here—good, decent folks—we carry for a shillin’. You are emigrants goin’ off, the devil knows where. We will never see you agin—you don’t care a dam for us and we don’t care a dam for you. It ’ull cost you jist five dollars for yer wagon, three dollars for each cart, and a shillin’ apiece for yer cows and sheep. Pay or git out—we only do this for ’commodation anyway, eh! Bill ? ”

Bill removed his pipe and guffawed from out the depths of his tangled whiskers.

The women in the carts were looking on anxiously. Things were getting strained—there was a tensivity in the air—the babies began to cry and the older children gulped.

“ Ruth! ”

“ What is it, John ? ”

“ Will we have to go back to Torrington, do you think ? ”

“ No, little boy, we have started for the Western Reserve, and I think we will go there. ”

“ Yes, I think we will go to the Western 'Serve—hold my hand, Ruth! ”

The four men of our party had drawn apart and were conversing in an undertone.

“ It will cost thirty dollars if we pay their price—nearly half of all the money we have ”

“ Suppose we give them a sheep! ”

“ I have two new pairs of shoes we might put in, ” said Deacon Brown.

“ And there are several bolts of cloth, ” added Jedediah.

“ I will try them on a trade, ” said the Deacon.

And so he walked down to the water's edge and tried to trade cloth and leather and mutton for passage. But the men were obdurate.

“ Git out! do we keep a junk shop? I reckon you don't want to cross, nohow—but if you do and don't like our prices, go on somewhar else. ”

But the next ferry was twenty-four miles up the river and the men who owned it might be as rapacious as these. Things looked desperate.

Captain Judson advised scraping the coin together out of the various stockings.

“ They have us—we had better surrender with honor, ” said the Captain.

Nathan drew some silver out of his pocket and made pretense of counting it. As he did so, he suggested a plan.

"They are ungodly men or I never, never would consent to it," said the Deacon under his breath. Then they all fished in their pockets for silver and they put it all in a hat, just as if it were a church collection.

Deacon Brown started down to the waterside with his offering, and the others followed carelessly after with hands in their pockets.

The two men on the perch smiled, knocked the ashes out of their pipes and came forward.

"It 's pretty hard, brother," said the Deacon, "to take so much money when we have so little. Can't you throw off just a bit?"

"Not a dam cent! eh! Bill?"

Bill guffawed. The man reached forward to take the hat containing the money.

He did not take it.

Nathan standing at his side had caught him by the waist and lifting him in the air dashed him on his back, and had fallen upon the fellow's chest with such force that the breath left his body in a grunt.

The three other men stood about the bewhiskered and astonished Bill with upraised ox goads.

"That rope in the tail end of the cart!" shouted Nathan, as he pinned his squirming man to the ground.

Little John slid from his seat and dragged out the rope in a twinkling.

"Here, Ruth, wrap it around his legs. If you kick, you scoundrel, I 'll strangle you," and the young man's steely grasp clutched around the man's throat.

The man did not kick; and Ruth and little John took a full dozen tight coils around the fellow's legs.

Meanwhile, the boys and girls who drove the sheep came up, and administered various strokes and prods and digs and slashes at the prostrate man with their sticks.

Nathan completed the tying with sailor-like skill and then turned his attention to Bill. His hands were tied securely behind him, although he begged hard for mercy. Then he offered to ferry the whole party over free, but Deacon Brown offered him a dollar, seeing they would have to supply their own motive power.

Bill consented and so did the gentleman on the grass. The drawbridge was lowered, the oxen unyoked, and all took hold and with a long pull and strong pull and a pull altogether the big wagon was run on the boat. Then the women and the babies were put aboard and they pushed off.

Bill's hands were unloosed and he worked the oar vigorously, while Captain Judson looked after him with the butt end of a whip.

The farther shore was reached without difficulty, all singing as they disembarked :

“Over the Dark River Thou hast guided us.”

The wagon was unloaded and the men and boys started back for another load.

Two trips more and all were safely over, down to the last black-faced lamb and John's squirrel.

The man tied fast with the long coil of rope was on the opposite bank. Bill was alone with his ferry on the western shore.

“Hold on, William! before you go over to release your evil companion, one word with thee,” said Deacon Brown. The Deacon had no love for the Quakers, yet when engaged in purely religious duties, he always used the “thee” and “thou.”

Bill came ashore and stood dogged on the bank.

"It grieves me to know that thou art an ungodly man."

Bill made no defense, because there was no defense to make.

"William, repeat after me the Lord's Prayer!"

And so the Deacon said the prayer, three words at a time, and Bill repeated them after him.

After which Jedediah took the man in hand and made him repeat the Apostles' Creed. Then they collected two shillings from him for the rope that was in the possession of his partner, and started away.

The women had yoked the oxen. And as the carts and the big wagon moved slowly off up the hill, Bill shouted a curse and pushed the ferry clear of the landing.

The curse was not heard, however, for the loud, clear strains of a hymn drowned even the loud creaking of the carts, and high over all could be distinguished Mrs. Judson's sharp falsetto:

"Safely through another week, Thou hast brought us on our way."

CHAPTER VII

JOY ABIDETH BUT A DAY

BUT now the road was narrow and rocky and difficult, as the road to Paradise always is, Deacon Brown explained.

There were high hills to cross where the ox teams had to double up and all hands pushed. Occasionally there were swamps where "corduroy" roads had been made; and where the spring floods had disarranged the roadbed logs had to be cut and moved into place.

Even then it sometimes happened that a cart would

get stuck in the mud. But by prying with long poles and hitching on an extra team or two the conspiracy of the mire would be overcome. And at night when prayers were said Deacon Brown would specify the facts and thank the Lord for having delivered them out of the hand of the enemy.

It was formerly believed by many that Providence did not watch over affairs west of the Hudson except in the cases of stray Puritan emigrants. The Judsons and the Browns rather inclined to this belief, but the Crosbys did not trouble themselves much about it.

In fact true lovers are Pantheists or Pagans ever. Lovers are credulous—they have a faith in the miraculous beyond the wildest dreams of merely pious people.

Love is at once an isolation and an absorption. And so Nathan and Ruth lived a little above, and outside, and beyond the rest of the camp.

They were very happy.

They saw signs in the clouds, and portents in the trees, and heard a message in the breeze: they called each other's attention to this or that as they passed, by a nod or a smile or a wave of the hand, and they had a little sign language of their own as lovers always have. Sometimes Ruth would walk by the side of the steers and drive them herself, while Nathan would go ahead.

"A woman should never learn to do a thing she has n't got to do, for some day her man will make her do it whether or no," said Mrs. Judson quietly to Ruth.

And that night Ruth of course told Nathan and they thought it very funny. They were happy, so happy, happy all day long; full of joy and peace at night and glad in the morning. And the thought that the joy could ever end had never occurred to them.

There was little bickering in the camp, all were content, even though various temperaments were represented. Not one of all the score was conscious of a stomach, not one had "nerves." Trouble might come, but if so it must be a tangible thing, not a mere trumped up sprite of the brain.

They were well—were these people—for all things that live in the open air have health. Quails, kingfishers and blue-jays never go into a decline; neither does the chipmunk's health fail. The free, boisterous winds of heaven blow dull care away.

Plague-struck envy and puling discontent are part of the price we pay for civilization. God made the country, man the town.

The days passed and still they pushed on. The settlements were now far apart and single houses rare. At night wolves would sometimes howl about the camp and the wild scream of panthers could be heard coming from the depths of the forest.

There were occasional reports of marauding bands of Indians that ranged the forests and lay in wait for travelers. At night a guard was set—the men taking turns of two hours each when they watched with rifle in hand.

But the wildness of the woods had no fear for these people—it meant freedom. Five generations of men who had dared the dangers of the sea and the savagery of things on land had bred in them a stolid indifference to peril. Besides all this they had faith in God. Had He not led His chosen people out of bondage? He, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps.

But God's wrath fell on that happy company—fell on them as the lightning singles out the tallest, strongest oak and shatters it to the very roots at a single blazing

blast. For who can endure even when His wrath is kindled but a little!

The caravan was moving up a rocky hillside. The road was very narrow.

Above rose the green hill and below lay a rocky gorge. The young oxen began to crowd and the wheels of the heavy cart slid dangerously near the edge. Nathan endeavored to force the steers to the other side. The tired animals stopped. The cart with its heavy load was pulling them back, and the wheels were slowly slipping over the loose stones of the bank. The young man threw his shoulder against the wheel and endeavored to urge the oxen forward. The shale slipped and a sudden balking move of the oxen sent the cart toppling over. Nathan sprang back—a grape vine caught his heel—he fell and the big hub struck him square on the chest, pinning him fast. It was full ten minutes before two saplings could be cut for pries, and that ton of weight lifted from his form.

He struggled to speak—"Ruth—Ruth"—but the message was not given. The look of anguish faded from the face and in its place came a half smile, a smile of peace and perfect rest.

"He's just going to say something," said little John.

"Silence, boy," sternly said Deacon Brown, "the man is dead."

They wrapped the body in a bed-quilt—one of those five quilts given as wedding presents. Strong hands righted the cart, drew it up on the road, blocked the wheels, and replaced the load. Then they gently lifted the lifeless form of the owner into this hearse that his own hands had formed and fashioned.

The women tried to lead Ruth away; but no, she took up the goad from where it had fallen from her husband's

grasp; she did not shed a tear nor utter a cry; she started the oxen forward, walking by their side. The caravan moved on, and mile after mile, as the rays of the burning sun fell, they went steadily forward. The women were astonished at Ruth's actions; the men were hushed into silence; the children thought that death was only sleep.

Several hours passed, and still the carts creaked wearily westward.

"She don't seem to have no feelin's," said Mrs. Judson in an undertone to her husband.

The Captain might have answered that there were sorrows too deep for tears, but he said nothing.

"He died in his sins—it 's a warning," said Jedediah.

"True, he had never acknowledged his Saviour," answered Deacon Brown, "but he was a manly fellow and I doubt not was a true Christian at heart—if so, he 's saved. 'For His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting!'"

"He never confessed Christ before men, 'and whosoever is ashamed of Me before men, him will I also be ashamed of in the Day of Judgment,'" continued Jedediah.

"'Judge not that ye be not judged,'" answered the Deacon as he waved the young man away.

When they came to a halt at sundown, Ruth's eyes were bloodshot and two bright pink spots burned on her cheeks.

This hectic flush only enhanced her beauty. And the quiet of her manner might have been quite in keeping with her womanly dignity: but the quiet was of a peculiar, fearful kind.

Jedediah thought he would say a few words of comfort to her; he approached, looked at her, and—changed his

mind. The women came and kissed her on the cheek, but she only gazed back stolidly—dumbly.

“ Father says Nathan is dead—stone dead—and won’t never come to life till the Judgment Day, but I ’m here, Ruth, don’t you see! Ruth, why don’t you answer? I ’m going to take care of you!” and little John caressed her hand.

Then tears came to her relief; sanity came back and she faced her grief, as women have since the world began, and as men and women must until the heavens shall be rolled together as scroll; for joy abideth but a day, but the sorrow of man endureth forever.

CHAPTER VIII

A VIGIL WITH DEATH

IT rained that night: dark, angry clouds scurried across the face of the murky sky, and rumbling, threatening thunder reverberated constantly, sending its dull booming miles and miles across wild stretches of rock and glade, of forest and swamp.

The dogs whined under the wagons as they sought a dry place, the lonesome sheep bleated, the horses turned their tails to the storm, and as the lightning shone out they could be seen standing with humped backs and lowered heads.

Ruth was alone with her dead.

The women had tried to take her away, as the men had made arrangements to watch by the corpse, but her firm will overruled them and she was alone in the canvas-covered cart with her beloved. She covered the stiffening form carefully as if to keep out the chill, seemingly

not knowing that the cold and damp were now his portion.

The load had been partially removed, and she sat in one of the hickory chairs and leaned her tired head on the bent bows that his hand had shaped.

She thought she could keep her vigil until morning, for how could sleep come and keep company with despair ?

The dull hours passed, and the big raindrops fell with monotonous thump on the sail-cloth and trickled over the sides on spoke and tire.

The splashing steps of the man on watch could be heard as he made his rounds.

The hours wore on and when daylight came, cold and gray, Mrs. Brown picked her way over to the cart where lay the dead. She parted the canvas and looked in. There by the side of her lover lay Ruth, one arm thrown across his form, sleeping peacefully : her breath coming and going in the slow, measured rhythm of youth and health.

CHAPTER IX

SORROW'S RESPITE FOUND IN WORK

BEFORE noon the sun came out warm and pleasant. The drooping boughs, heavy with their weight of water, glittered and glistened in the bright rays, and sent a merry shower on all who chanced to brush against them.

For several hours the men up on the hillside a quarter of a mile away had been busy with ax and adze, and pick and shovel. A rude coffin had been made from boards split from a butternut log, and then smoothed with an adze. A grave was dug. The coffin was then carried,

with solemn steps and slow, down to the camp, and the body was placed in it.

Jedediah read the Thirty-eighth Psalm, a hymn was sung, Deacon Brown made a short address, naming one by one the various virtues of the deceased, and ending with the warning, “ ‘ Be ye also ready, for ye know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.’ ” Another hymn and then a prayer; then all filed past,—children too, for the lesson of this tragic taking away must not be lost on them,—and took a last farewell view of that cold and quiet face.

The slab that served for the top of the coffin was adjusted, and wound in place with various hickory withes. Two stout sticks were placed beneath the head and foot; and Captain Judson, Deacon Brown, Jedediah, and Joe lifted the bier and bore it slowly up the slope.

Ruth and Mrs. Brown followed behind, the rest came two by two. The coffin was lowered by means of reins taken from a harness. The Deacon sprinkled a handful of soil into the grave and said, “ Dust to dust, ashes to ashes.”

A short prayer was offered, and with a shovel, working rapidly, spelling each other, the men quickly filled the grave, mounded up the earth, and patted it down with the back of the spade.

An oak slab with the name, age and date of death of the dead was driven in at the head of the grave. The company turned and went down the hill.

Mrs. Brown walked on one side of Ruth and little John trotted along on the other, holding her hand.

The Deacon approached: “ Ruth — I mean Mrs. Crosby — we can't take you back to your folks, you know; we are two hundred miles and more from Torrington; but like enough we will meet someone goin'

that way and then you can go back—I will buy your cart and —”

“ I do not think I will go back! ”

“ Not go back to your father and mother ? ”

“ No, Nathan wanted me to go on with you all! ”

“ Nathan! why, when did he say so ? ”

“ He did not say so; his last words as you heard were my name, and he was going to tell me to go on, but his breath failed.”

“ Going to tell you to go on ? ”

“ Yes, I could always anticipate his thought —”

“ That ’s right, Ruth,” broke in Mrs. Judson, “ you must stay with us.”

“ Yes, it would be foolish to go back,” spoke Jedediah.

“ Hurrah! ” said red-faced, thirteen-year-old Joe as he turned a somersault on the grass, “ she ’s not goin’ back, boys, what did I tell you ? ”

This was addressed to the children tagging behind. Mrs. Brown stepped forward and gave the lad a smart box on the ear, with a “ Take that, will you! ”

“ You can have my Sis,” said Mrs. Judson.

“ And my John is yourn already,” said Mrs. Brown.

“ And we all—esteem you very much,” said Jedediah.

“ Go and kiss her, Sis, and tell her you will ride in her cart and be with her all the time,” continued Mrs. Judson, shifting her baby to the other arm.

Sis was fourteen. Sis was tall and bony and awkward. She had grown too fast, and people had spoken of her height until she had tried to conceal it by a stoop and had become round-shouldered. Her hair was very straight and hung in rat-tails, and was generally in her eyes. She had a way of constantly brushing it away from her line of vision—probably in response to a perpetual snarl:

“ Sis, git your hair outen your eyes—what did I tell you! ”

When she was dressed up these rat-tails were all pushed straight back up, so that they lifted her eyebrows and showed her high, narrow forehead. Then these tails were tied in place by a yellow calico string—a bit of carpet rag—that ran behind her ears and up over the top of her head.

She had always gone barefoot until this summer, and her shoes hurt her feet and spoiled her gait; her ankles were thin and one stocking was usually down around her shoe top.

“ What you standin’ there for, awkwardness—be you deaf? go kiss Ruth Halsted and tell her you will stay with her,” ordered Mrs. Judson.

The girl made an embarrassed motion to push the hair from her eyes, but did not move. Ruth stepped over and kissed her gently, and, taking the big red hand in her own, moved away to where the oxen were grazing.

All were busy yoking up. The camp was in a stir getting ready for departure.

“ I kin hook up them steers, I kin,” said Sis.

“ I ’m glad, for then we need not call on others,” Ruth replied.

“ Mother says I ’m awkward as awkward, but I haint ef there ’s work to be did.”

“ I don’t think you are awkward.”

“ Well, I am ef I ’m standin’ still.”

“ Well, it ’s better to be awkward when idle and graceful at work, than to be awkward at work and graceful when idle.”

“ Say that agin, please, and not so fast.”

Ruth repeated the remark.

“ Lordy—I guess that ’s so—though I don’t zakly

understand—I think I must be deaf, as mother says—whoa, Buck! back up there—you Bright!” and the goad descended with a whack.

They started away—nineteen souls in all. Sis walked and drove the steers; then Ruth took a turn at it, and little John told them how. The road was better now and led along a great quiet valley. It was an hour after dark before they camped that night; the moon rose bright and full over the eastern hill and lighted the way.

Early the next morning they started again.

“Land sakes! who braided your hair, Sis?” called Mrs. Judson to her daughter.

“Her!” said Sis, pointing to Ruth.

“And dear me, if you haint tied your shoes for once, and from the looks of your stockin’s you’ve got on your garters!”

Sis was walking by the side of the oxen; Ruth and John sat on the seat. Ruth was weaving slough grass into long strips to make a straw hat for Sis, to take the place of the sun-bonnet which she usually wore hanging on her back.

“What’s in Bob’s basket, Ruth, guess?”

“Bob?”

“No, see!”

John showed the empty basket. Peeking out from the front of his open roundabout gleamed two little black eyes. By bribes of nuts the squirrel was induced to come out. He perched on John’s shoulder nibbling at the meaty morsels.

By and by Ruth got off to drive and Sis sat on the seat. John trotted behind and on his shoulder perched the squirrel.

“Land sakes!” said Mrs. Judson, “what next!”

CHAPTER X

CONFORM OR FIGHT

ONE can endure sorrow, but it takes two to be glad. The laughter had died from Ruth's voice, the light had gone from her eyes, and there came a soft, subdued sadness—a dumb resignation. The constant physical exercise, to a great degree, kept carking care at bay; and, wise woman that she was, she filled the spare moments with useful effort in behalf of others.

But in a month she had changed from a blooming girl of twenty into a sallow woman of thirty.

"It was a judgment," said Jedediah to his mother.

"Yes, she was too frivolous."

"Fond of ornament and pleasures of the world."

"Yes, and so the hand of God was laid heavy 'pon her—but it 's all for the best."

"True, it 's His plan. Just see how she has changed for good—so circumspect."

"Jedediah?"

"Well—say it."

"You will be reg'lar ordained and installed in a charge when we git to the Reserve?"

"Yes, if it 's the Lord's will!"

"And you will need a help-meet?"

"Ah, I had never thought of that."

"Yes, Jedediah, you must pray to be guided aright."

"Surely, we must ask Him to be with us in all we do."

"And if I was goin' to suggest —"

"Yes, Mother."

"Can't you guess, Jed?"

"No, I can't imagine what you 're comin' at."

"Ruth Halsted!"

“ Well, I am surprised—I never thought o’ such a thing.”

“ She has the cart— ”

“ But not the grace of — ”

“ And the steers— ”

“ God in her heart.”

“ And a feather bed— ”

“ But without religion.”

“ And a dozen quilts— ”

“ That ’so, but— ”

“ And twenty dollars in silver.”

“ Still she must suffer more—her heart is not yet subdued; I tried to be friendly with her this morning,—I asked after her spiritual state.”

“ And what did she say ? ”

“ She said she thought my mother was callin’ me.”

“ She has n’t the realizin’ sense of savin’ grace—if she could really be brought low and be convicted of sin ! ”

“ That ’s what I was thinkin’.”

When evening prayers were held a half hour later, Jedediah prayed for “ one in our midst who is yet in the thrall of sin and the bonds of iniquity. Subdue, O Lord, her stubborn spirit so she will come to know Thee, the only true and living God—create in her a new heart, O Lord, and cause her to turn from her sins and live.”

There were loud responses of Amen, and all felt that there was an awakening of power such as had not been known for some weeks.

“ They really ought to let the girl alone—that ’s what I think,” said Mrs. Brown to the Deacon after they had gone to bed that night.

“ But, wife, you know she has never really been converted ! ”

“ I don’t know about that, but she is as good as the rest of us.”

“ Of course her morality is all right, but man’s righteousness is as filthy rags.”

“ Well, there may be two kinds o’ righteousness—I don’t know, I ’m only a woman and can’t argufy, but ’pears to me she ’s as good as us—see how patient she is, and then her teachin’ all the children their letters and learnin’ ’em to count.”

“ I know, but, Unity Brown, this is only the world’s goodness—she never confessed her Saviour. ‘ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned ! ’ ”

The good old Deacon had Scripture on his side, and Mrs. Brown was not wholly sure but that she was in the wrong, anyway. Her defense of Ruth was only a woman’s impulse. Of course people should be good, and besides that they should not hold aloof from religion—Mrs. Brown knew that.

But Ruth was not godless. In childhood she had been “ sprinkled ” and she had always attended church, and took part in the singing, and bowed her head during prayer, and listened to the sermon. But when others had stood up and made public professions, she had kept still.

She could not think of God as a great big man who watched people and set down in a book all their actions—she did not know who God was or what He was. That He made all things she fully felt was true, and that our life came from Him, but why He should send His Son to suffer for sins that others had committed, she could not comprehend. It was all so mysterious and miraculous and wonderful—how could she know all about God’s plans ? and so she never pretended that she did.

At prayers now, morning and evening for a full week, she was mentioned—not by name, but all knew who was meant. It began to weigh upon her—this being spoken of as “obdurate,” “stubborn,” “stiff-necked,” etc. The Deacon had come to her and talked with her confidentially and quietly; Mrs. Judson had done the same, and Jedediah had attempted it.

Even the children knew that they were trying to bring her in, and they stared at her curiously. A sense of guilt began to prey upon her—she grew nervous.

“What ’s the use—better give in!” blurted Sis one day as they walked by the side of the oxen.

“Do what, Sis?”

“Give in—stand up—’cept the Saviour and be baptized.”

“Should I do so, just because I ’m urged, Sis?”

“What ’s the harm—it can’t do no hurt, and then”—

“And then?”

“P’r’aps they ’re right.”

“Perhaps they are right,” mused Ruth.

“It stops the fuss and you ’ll feel better,” continued Sis after about ten minutes.

“Will I feel better, Sis?”

“Yes, it ’s you agin them now, and them agin you—there ’s no pious in it, it ’s jest which ’ull beat!”

That night at prayers Ruth stood up and said in a low voice that she wanted to give her heart to God and to be a thorough Christian—to be filled with the Christ-spirit. She asked all present to pray for her that she might walk aright.

“Let us pray!” roared Deacon Brown.

All knelt. Mrs. Brown was on one side of Ruth and Mrs. Judson on the other. They each prayed in whispers and the Deacon prayed with shouts, and when he had

finished, Jedediah took the words right out of his mouth and continued earnestly for five minutes, and then Captain Judson came in with a few sentences. Then they sang.

“Is your peace made with God?” asked the Deacon.

“It is,” said Ruth.

“Bless the Lord, she’s saved!” shouted Jedediah.

There was much handshaking and some joyous weeping, and all felt that a burden had been dropped—a tension gone.

“Don’t you feel better?” asked Sis the next day as they journeyed.

“Yes, Sis, much better.”

“I knew you would—’t was the same with me.”

And Ruth did feel better. The grim awakening each morning to face her sorrow was not quite so grim—and the awful loneliness of her heart was not quite so black. Whether she had made her peace with God is not for us to say, but she had made peace with these people with whom she lived. There were now no differences, but a close bond of sympathy between them all—a oneness of hope—a bond of fellowship.

The Deacon made plans for building a church in the New Canaan that would also do for a school-house, where Ruth should teach the children on week days.

“You mean a school-house where there will be church,” said Mrs. Brown.

“No, Mother—I don’t mean no such thing—I mean a meetin’ house that can be used for a school.”

At times when Ruth thought of the good she might yet be able to do, she almost smiled. She picked thorns out of the children’s feet, and smoothed away their childish sorrows, and told them stories; and little John hung tightly to her dress most all the time, as if she might get away.

And as for Sis, she kept the hair out of her eyes and wore her garters and laced her shoes.

"I do declare, that girl haint near as slovenly as she uster was," said Mrs. Judson more than once.

CHAPTER XI

MAN PROPOSES, BUT WOMAN DISPOSES

RUTH'S patient, gentle spirit had won the love of the whole camp; someway they all looked up to her as a sort of superior being. Her strength of mind held their respect; her sadness won their sympathy. Such resignation in affliction—who could withstand the sweet influence of such a soul? Her smile was a benediction.

"It 's religion done it," said Mrs. Judson.

"It is strange," said Mrs. Brown, "once so frivolous and now as perfect a Christian as I ever knew!"

All waited on her; all did for her; there was a kind of rivalry as to who could minister most to her needs. Perhaps Jedediah outdid the rest in kindness: at meal time he saw that her plate was filled first; when Scripture was read he found the page for her, and on the march he often hovered near offering to help, where his presence perhaps was only a hindrance.

Ruth accepted these attentions dumbly, passively. At evening prayers she sometimes sang from the same book with him, simply because he offered it and she could not refuse without giving offense. At such times Mrs. Judson would nudge the Captain, and that worthy man would smile knowingly.

"As fine a young woman as that can't live alone; 'taint nature," said the Captain one day to the Deacon.

“ Yes, I s’pose women do get over their trouble quick when they find another man,” said the Deacon. “ I ’d hardly thought it though of that ’un—still I don’t blame her ! ”

And it came to be a settled thing—looked on as a matter of course—and why not ?

Here is a fine young woman, unmarried. She needs the protection that only a husband can give. And here is a young man of marriageable age, who needs a helpmeet, at least his mother says so, and he fully agrees with her. He will soon be a minister and should have the assistance of a gentle, yet earnest, Christian wife. No woman better looking or more intelligent can be found than this young widow. She is strong and can work; she is diplomatic and can serve; she has a dower and this is no objection; and best of all she is alone, with no prying kinsmen or interfering parents. When safely married she can be subdued if needs be (which of course is not likely to be the case).

In those days the woman’s side of the question was not considered, as it is now, when feminine careers are opening up for women outside of procreation and housework. The advice of St. Paul was never doubted: “ If a woman would have knowledge, let her ask her husband.” Woman’s work was to minister to man’s wants—no one questioned it—the Bible said so. Again, in a pioneer country people marry young—nature demands it—to hold aloof is a sin. God even allowed polygamy among pioneers. How about Abraham and Isaac ?

Thought is in the air and women absorb it. The gossip of the camp did not interest Ruth—her heart was far away near a lonely grave on a wooded hillside; strange misty forms arose out of the future and beckoned her on and on. At times she seemed to be moving in a dream

and expected without a doubt that some morning she would awake and find Nathan by her side, and together they would laugh at the nightmare of the past.

But it came over her one day that a coil was tightening around her: all of these people expected she would do a certain thing; even children were discussing it; she was drifting—moving in a certain direction, and if she did not put forth a strong effort soon these people would have their way exactly as they had done once before, when she arose to her feet and professed a faith that was not hers. Only this time when she stood up it would be by the side of a man and her lips would move dumbly and say “ I will,” and then the people would sing, just as they did before, and she would be the property of this man to be used as his will or whim might dictate.

The earnest thought of several people brings about a certain result—this is called “ answer to prayer.”

It would come as sure as death—it was approaching—she need not do a thing, nor lift a finger—fate was binding her fast—she was powerless and slowly drifting to sea. And this all because she desired peace and had been compliant when she should have been rebellious.

And now what if she asserted herself—would they all turn against her? Very well, it must be so.

That evening Ruth went to Mrs. Brown, who she thought would be most likely to understand.

Ruth meant to talk to her calmly, to unburden her heart by degrees, and make all plain by word of mouth. She began to speak, but a lump came into her throat; she tried to go on—the elder woman’s mother-heart was touched—she held out her arms and the motherless girl fell in her embrace and sobbed away her grief and her fears on the good woman’s shoulder. Mrs. Brown was

a wife who had many cares—there was much work to do, heavy burdens to bear, and little time for sentiment or demonstration.

Ruth did not have to talk much: it was not necessary, the other understood.

Peace came to Ruth that night—pleasant dreams and visions of rest. After all, does it not really take two to bear a burden?

They had reached the shores of Lake Erie. Great was the excitement, and great the joy when that vast stretch of water was seen. All were filled with a strange wonderment and a heartfelt gratitude to the Providence that had thus brought them out of the wilderness. The wagon-train halted.

For nearly three months they had journeyed, journeyed through unending woods, but now their eyes could look straight out in front for five, ten, yes, twenty miles.

“Is it the Western Reserve, Ruth?” asked John.

“No, little boy, it is Lake Erie.”

“It looks like the sky turned upside down. Is the Western Reserve like that?”

“Just as serene as that!” said a voice at the cart wheel. Ruth started a little. It was Jedediah who spoke—he was chewing a stick—one foot was on the felloe.

“Just as serene as that, if me and you are together, Ruth, eh!”

Ruth colored and turned her head to avoid his leer.

“Of course you blush, little widow, it ’s becoming; but I have prayed that our future will be as smooth as the lake, and a Voice says it shall be so. We will reach the town of Erie to-morrow, Ruth—did you know that?”

“No, to-morrow?”—she clutched at it, it seemed a change of subject.

“ Yes, to-morrow ; there is someone there I know.”

“ Is there, who is it ? ”

“ A minister ! ”

“ Indeed ! ”

“ Yes, shall we call on him, me and you—why not ? ”

“ No, I think we will not call on him.”

“ We might as well—now ’s the time—you ’ll never get ’nother man like me. I ’m goin’ to be ordained soon.”

“ Jed Judson, you let that girl alone, will you ! ”

Mrs. Brown had approached the cart from the other side and had caught Jedediah’s last remark. She walked around and standing close to him turned her sun-bonnet defiantly towards his face :

“ Go long with you now and don’t you bother a lone woman.”

“ Why, what ’s the fuss, Sister Brown—was you afraid you would n’t get an invite to the weddin’ ? ”

“ Who says there ’s going’ to be a wedding ? ”

“ Why, the widow will say so if you wait a minute.”

Ruth turned a supplicating look at Mrs. Brown, and spoke :

“ He means well, Mrs. Brown, Jedediah means well, but it can never be—make him understand once for all that I am his friend, but can never, never, never be his wife ! ”

“ Now, will you quit pesterin’ her ? ” asked Mrs. Brown.

“ And why won’t she marry me ? ” whined Jedediah ?
 “ I like her and she says she likes me—you heard that with your own ears.”

“ Fool ! ” Mrs. Brown took the youth by the elbow and led him away three steps. Then she whispered something to him. He smiled and whistled a long, low whistle of astonishment.

“ Jeeminee! but I don’t care for that—I won’t mind if she won’t!”

“ Jed Judson, are you crazy?”

“ Well, if that ’s all that ’s in the way, let her say the word.”

“ You are a fool.”

Mrs. Brown’s stout form was shaking with womanly indignation. She led the young man straight across to where his mother sat on a log nursing her baby.

“ Charity Judson, you make this boy quit botherin’ Ruth Halsted; if he says anything more ’bout marryin’ of her, and you don’t box his ears, I will!!”

CHAPTER XII

PIONEER DAYS AND A NIGHT ALONE IN THE WOODS

IN 1796, the first pilgrims from New England landed at Conneaut, Ohio; they called the place New Plymouth. But the name slipped them, for commerce is stronger than pride of ancestry; and the name that the French traders gave the post crowded the other out, like a cuckoo in the nest of a thrush.

When our wagon-train reached Conneaut—only a few miles beyond the Pennsylvania line—there was great rejoicing. There were prayers of thanksgiving and songs of praise; and then there was feasting.

Poverty in the city is horror; but poverty in the country is only a disadvantage—and not always that. These people had little money; they were poor, but they were not poverty-stricken. They had an abundance to eat, raiment to keep them warm, and fuel for a hundred years. They had health and hope and faith.

After a few days of rest at Conneaut they were joined by several other families, and together they pushed on through the forest for a two days' journey to the south. At Conneaut they had met a worthy man by the name of David Hudson, and he led the caravan to a clearing in the woods where he had built a house.

Then they camped—there on the banks of a stream in the primeval woods—and the long, long march was at an end.

Northern Ohio was very beautiful in those days—beautiful in its wild, untamed diversity. Rock and hill, forest and stream, wooded slope and clearing; and then the rich bottom-lands where Nature seemed to make her tryst, waiting for the pioneer—all this was New England, with New England's blessings multiplied by two and her disadvantages divided in half.

There were miles on miles of waving forests, tunnels of endless trees: oak, beach, elm, chestnut, and now and again great pines that lifted their evergreen heads high over all, as if jealous of the sun's rays. These brooding forests were dim even at midday, dusky in the evening, fragrant, sweet, dewy.

The cool streams were stocked with gamy, hungry fish; beneath the ferns and in the canebrakes were sounds of stirring game, mark of hoofs at the deerlicks, plantigrade tracks about rocky caves, little clearings where wild turkeys strutted and called; and from the afterglow of sunset until daydawn might be heard the screech of panther, the howl of wolf and the wild, mysterious call of night birds echoing across the solemn dark. And now all day long the ring of the ax could be heard; and the smoke ascended from a hundred sacrificial fires: the forest was being subdued.

The women and children burned brush and trees;

certain other women looked after the babies; others prepared food; the men hewed logs into shape and erected a meeting house—a house for the worship of God.

In a week they were putting on the roof. A solemn service was held.

There was a dirt floor to this church, and the windows were only sliding shutters, and the pulpit was very rude, and the pews slabs of wood; but this church was dedicated and the people were very happy.

While log houses were being built the people moved into the church, dividing it off into rooms by deer-skins or cloth suspended from poles.

The name of Froebel was not known to these people, and the word “*crèche*” had not yet been imported, but still the kindergarten and the day nursery were established by Ruth. For a primitive civilization is like the highest in this: that which is needed is evolved; in one case by necessity, in the other by science.

Ruth's presence in that primitive settlement was a benison: her tact, her gentleness, her patience, and her common sense did for the children what the mothers could not; her endowments set her apart as a teacher of the young, and all respected her office.

When the sun set the example, children went to bed, and as the darkness gathered, “the grown-ups” did likewise. But first the fond mothers would take inventory of their broods as they lay sleeping in rows, in all the positions of abandon that tired nature suggests.

One night, as usual, Mrs. Brown looked after her little flock before going, herself, to rest. She checked them all off on her fingers and then she did it again, for one was missing.

Little John could not be found.

The mother called his name aloud, but the only answer

was the echo of her anxious cry. The alarm was given: men took up the call; they ran hither and thither with torches; they followed the bed of the stream for miles and the roadway where a path was blazed through the forest. And still they shouted aloud, but there came back only the sad echo and muffled noises of the night.

When daylight came it brought night to the stricken mother. The searchers returned from their fruitless hunt. Then they started out again—men, women and children—walking straight out into the forest ten feet apart. They stretched out in a line a full quarter of a mile wide. Only Ruth remained at the village to take care of those too young to tramp.

Her eyes were red with weeping, her head ached from the sleepless vigil, her heart was heavy with its sorrow; for some secret mysterious bond had bound her own fate up with that of the strange child who had gone off into the void of the unknown. She went drearily about her work and her inward eye saw only a tattered, tangled pile of child-clothes, that the searchers would find and bring sorrowfully home; for at night the forest was full of ravenous wolves and prowling bears.

A little shadow came into the doorway and a little voice piped:

“He’s gone, Ruth—I want to die!”

Ruth thought it was a spirit and she answered:

“So do I!”

But she looked and there was little John Brown, very wet with dew, and eyes as red as hers from much weeping. In an instant he was held close to her heart, and both cried, and although five babies joined in the chorus Ruth heard them not.

Finally John squirmed his head loose from Ruth’s embrace, as they sat there on the door sill:

“ Where are all the folks, Ruth ? ”

“ Looking for you, little boy.”

“ Will mother whip me very hard, do you s’pose ? ”

“ No, dear child, she will be only glad that you are safe.”

“ I don’t care even if father switches me—and he do switch awful—I want to die, I do.”

“ Why, John ? ”

“ Bob ’s gone ! ”

A fresh burst of weeping here followed, and Ruth be-thought herself of the agreed signal. She rested the long gun across a log and shut her eyes (for she was a woman), then pulled the trigger with a jerk. There was a loud report. Then she quickly poured in powder, rammed home a wad made from a hornet’s nest, primed the flint, and fired again, then once more.

“ I was going to starve myself to death so I would die myself dead, but I guess I ’d eat a bite if I could git it,” said little John as he leaned his head sadly on the door jamb.

Ruth started to get the boy something to eat, but she heard a shout from the forest and soon another from the edge of the clearing. She ran to the door and waved an apron. Soon the whole village came trooping in pell-mell.

“ Land a livin’—where was he at ? ” asked Mrs. Judson.

“ Did n’t the bears eat him ? ” called another.

“ Was he dead and come to life ? ” asked a little girl.

“ He oughter be well cuffed for makin’ us such a scare,” added Mrs. Judson.

“ That ’s right, a good taste of the birch is what he needs,” said the Rev. Jedediah.

“ I ’m sorry, John, that you should have been so perverse as to go away without telling us first,” solemnly said the Deacon.

And as all crowded around and asked questions, Ruth held the boy on her knee and his mother fed him bread and milk from a wooden bowl.

When hunger was partially satisfied, the child took time to say between two spoonfuls:

“ He ’s gone—the Lord took him.”

“ Is the child crazy—what do he mean ? ” asked a woman.

“ Bob ’s gone and I have nothin’ to live for ! ”

“ Oh, you mean the squirrel ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ I ’m glad, he was a nuisance.”

“ No he was n’t.”

“ Well, where were you ? ”

“ Bob run off and I followed him a hundred miles in the woods—he run up a holler tree, and I waited for him to come down. He did n’t come down—I waited all night in the holler of the tree. He ’s gone up in the sky to where Nathan is ! ”

“ He surely needs the birch,” mused Jedediah.

“ But did n’t you hear us call ? ” asked his father.

“ Of course I heard you, but I must do my duty—I waited in the holler of the tree for Bob to come ! ”

“ Such willfulness! the sprout is what he needs,” resumed Jedediah.

“ The Elder is right ! ” said several women in concert. Others nodded their sun-bonnets in approval.

“ I think you folks had better pike off and do your work, that ’s what I think,” said Mrs. Brown; “ when I can’t look after my own children, I ’ll send for you to give advice,” and she shooed them away with her apron.

Little John turned and put his arms around Ruth’s neck: “ God don’t ’flict everybody as much as He does we, does He, Ruth ? ”

“ No, dear little boy, but those whom He loveth, He chasteneth.”

“ Why does He do it ! ”

“ So as to make them better—prepare them for a great work, the Bible says.”

“ And do you think I will do a great work some day ? ”

“ I have never doubted it, John.”

“ Then I guess I won't die just yet a while ! ”

* * * * *

Three months after this a baby was born to Ruth Crosby—a girl baby. They called her Rachel.

In a very few days Ruth was propped up in one of the big hickory chairs on the sunny side of the log house. Little John stood near, very happy and very proud of the new arrival.

“ Ruth ! ” said John.

“ Yes, little boy.”

“ I know why God did not let the bears and wolves eat me that night ! ”

“ Why, John ? ”

“ He saved me so I could take care of you and Rachel.”

“ I think so, John.”

“ So I could take care of you, so you could both help me do my work.”

“ Lordy ! ” exclaimed Sis, who stood near. She made a quick jerk as if brushing her hair from her eyes.

“ Lordy ! but when that boy talks like that, it do give me the shivers up my back ! ”



Ruth Crosby

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER I

A CATTLE SALE AT ZANESVILLE

IN 1812 the capital of Ohio was at Zanesville. It was then removed to Chillicothe, but Zanesville remained a place of much importance. There was considerable society thereabouts, and for many miles in every direction it was considered the intellectual center: for no matter how crude or rude a people is, there are certain self-appointed "hubs" whence culture is supposed to radiate.

The highest court of the West sat at Zanesville; much of the Government machinery was located there; the military made it their chief rendezvous. And where these things are gathered together, there is always a large demand for tobacco, whiskey, and paste-board.

The uncertain tenure of office and the speculative spirit of Government contracts breed a fever in the blood that makes gambling a necessity, and then come late hours and stimulants as a matter of course.

Zanesville was very gay.

There were market days each month when farmers gathered for hundreds of miles. They brought sheep and cattle and horses to sell, if they were very rich; or if not so prosperous they brought only beans, corn, and wheat; then others who ranged the forests for bee trees brought honey, sarsaparilla, sassafras, and ginger root;

and there were Indians who brought skins—muskrats, coon, beaver, and deer.

When court was in session these monthly markets were busy places—for country people have ever a thirst for litigation—they buzz about an assize like moths around a candle.

In the square at Zanesville were rows of pens made from rails piled on each other after the manner of a “worm fence.” Perched on the top rail of one of these pens sat a long, slim youth of perhaps fifteen years. Back and forth ranged the buyers and sightseers. They joked and laughed and priced this and that, and made offers. No one seemed in a hurry—the market continued until things were sold—buy now or the next day or not at all.

“And have n’t you sold your cattle yet, youngster?”

“I sold two, sir.”

The questioner was a large man—good-natured—evidently well pleased with himself, and prosperous. His hair was red, eyes blue, and face slightly freckled. He wore a wide felt hat on the back of his head, top-boots into which his trousers were tucked, a flannel shirt, and as he talked he snapped a black-snake whip that he carried in his hand. He knew everyone and everyone seemed to know him. The boy on the rail was evidently a close observer: he had noticed this man go by several times, and he had seen that people in meeting him jerked the forefinger of their right hands to their hat brims and addressed him as “Kuhnel.”

The boy had tried this “Kuhnel” at the bar of his judgment as he sat there blinking in the sunshine, and the verdict was that the Colonel was not a worthy man.

Yet when the great Colonel to whom people jerked their forefingers to their hat brims, snapped his black-

snake whip, spat, and addressed the boy, the lad was pleased. The Colonel had come to the boy, not the boy to the Colonel. And the Colonel had looked up to him, too, for he sat clear on the top rail.

"Sold two, eh! well, where 's your pap? I reckon I 'll buy the rest if the price is right."

"You mean my father—he 's at home."

"'T aint you that 's sellin' the cattle?"

"Yes, I 'm selling the cattle."

"Where did you steal 'em?"

"I did not steal them. I brought them here to sell."

"Pap sent you?"

"Yes."

"What 's your name?"

"Brown."

"Holy smokes!—you might as well have no name 't all—if I 'd shout Brown right here, good and loud, twenty men would come on the run."

"My first name 's John."

"Worser and worser."

"We live at Hudson."

"Oho—now I see! yer dad aint Squire Owen?"

"Yes, that 's what they call him—his name 's Owen Brown."

"Well, your name 's Timothy Buckskin—now Timothy, how much for the lot?"

"The three two-year-olds are twenty-two dollars apiece, the ox is twenty-seven dollars, and the old cow is nineteen dollars."

"Jeminy cats, but you are percise; how much will you knock off if I take the lot?"

"Nothing!"

"And s'pose you don't sell 'em."

"I 'll drive them home."

“ Did you fetch 'em ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Alone ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ A hundred miles ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, you air smart ! ”

“ It will not be necessary for me to take the cattle back; someone will buy 'em.”

“ Did your dad put the prices on 'em ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, I 'll take 'em, drive 'em over to Silverside on the hill, and I 'll pay you when you come back.”

“ You pay me now and I 'll drive them over.”

“ Look here, Major,” the man called to another who was passing, “ this young Yank won't put these cattle in my pen 'til I pay him ! ”

The men laughed loud and uproariously, they pounded each other on the back, and then got the boy to repeat his refusal to let the cattle go until he had been paid. Again they roared and several men standing about shouted :

“ It 's one on you, Kuhnel—it 's one on you ! ”

The boy looked on with face unmoved; he returned their look with a steadiness of gaze that quite put several of the crowd out of countenance. There he sat, all clothed in buckskin; he wore a coonskin cap with a dangling tail, heavy shoes but no stockings. His complexion was the color of his clothes, and the dust on his shoes was the tint of both.

The Colonel got over his mirth, and drew forth a weasel-skin money bag. He counted out the money and handed it up to the lad. The boy counted it, distributed it carefully through several pockets and slid off the fence. He quickly took rail off rail, of the improvised

pen, and leading out the ox the rest of the cattle followed after.

"Go with him, Slivers," called the Colonel to a negro boy who stood near "Show him where to put 'em. Oh, you, Smith, Timothy, Yank, what 's your name? I say, you wait there at the house and git your dinner!"

CHAPTER II

JOHN BROWN FINDS FRIENDS AND FOES

JOHN and Slivers were friends from the first. They were evidently about the same age.

Slivers was a curiosity to John and John was a curiosity to Slivers. Slivers was that curious thing, "a red-head nigger." His wool was a rusty red, the color of iron in the ore, or of the breed of pigs known as "Jersey Reds." His eyes were light blue and his face was freckled as a turkey's egg.

The cattle were safely yarded and Slivers had walked around the tall boy twice. He examined the fringe on the buckskin jacket and stroked the dangling tail of the coonskin cap.

"You could n't feel it if you was whipped through that jacket," said Slivers.

"See here," said John, "Injuns made 'em, you can have one!"

Two yellow marbles were produced and the mulatto boy laughed with delight.

"Are they good to eat?" asked Slivers.

"No, you roll 'em, this way."

Slivers chuckled.

"I 'm 'fraid of Injuns, I am. They are decent in

town, but a mile out they catch folks and suck their blood."

"Who says so?"

"The Missus."

"Huh, I guess that 's a mistake. They never hurt me—I know 'em well—I talk Injun!"

"Was your daddy an Injun?"

"My father! why, my father is Squire Brown—a Deacon! What made you ask if he was an Injun?"

"You have fringe on your jacket."

"That 's nothing."

"When my daddy was a white man—why could n't yours be an Injun?"

"Who is your father?"

"Mine?"

"Yes."

"Will you never tell?"

"Never!"

"S' welp you?"

"Yes."

"Cross your heart, an' hope to never?"

"Yes."

The freckled boy looked carefully on all sides, and putting his face close to the other's ear whispered:

"Marse!"

"Who?"

"Marse Silverton."

"You mean the man who bought my cattle?"

"Of course—why not? I 'm a Silverton; some calls it Sliverton, and we is all Slivers. Thar 's Big Slivers, Little Slivers, Old Slivers, Tom Slivers, Jim Slivers—and that 's me, although Marse often calls me just plain Slivers. We all has red hair and blue eyes."

"Gracious! then Mrs. Silverton is black?"

“ Not very—ha, ha, ha, ha, ha ! ”

The laugh ended very abruptly. Slivers fell over backward from where he was sitting and crawled behind a gooseberry bush.

John looked around to see the sudden cause of fright, but he saw only a tall, slender woman. She wore a blue dress, a white shawl, and she walked very slowly as if ill; her face was pale. She took a seat on the veranda that ran clear around the large, low-roofed, two-story house.

“ Is she gone ? ” whispered Slivers.

“ Who, the lady ? ”

“ Yeh.”

“ No, she is on the porch, who is she ? ”

“ That ? that ’s the Missus.”

“ Why do you lie so—that is not your mother ? ”

John had never seen a real live lady; he had heard of them just as we hear of angels, and as we would recognize an angel at once should we meet one, so did this boy recognize the lady. Ladies were pale and delicate, they wore blue dresses and were very beautiful. This was a lady and this negro boy was taking her name in vain.

“ It ’s better to tell the truth and not be so frivolous.”

“ Hold on, Injun—I did n’t say Missus was my mother—my mammy was black.”

“ Very likely, where is she now ? ”

“ Sold ! ”

“ So you are a slave ? ”

“ No, I haint—I just b’long to Marse Silverton.”

“ But he can sell you, too ? ”

“ I s’pose so, if I don’t behave.”

“ Are you sure he ’s your father ? ”

“ Are you sure ‘bout yourn ? ”

“ We are talking about you.”

“ Well, I says to Marse once when he was feelin’ good : ‘ You says I ’s cute — I reckon if I is, it ’s cause you ’re my daddy!’ ”

“ What did he say ? ”

“ Did n’t say nothin’, just slammed a plate at my head—if it had hit me I would n’t be layin’ here talkin’ to you. Next day he says if I ever tole anything like that agin, he ’d send me straight to the cotton fields.”

“ We don’t have any slaves where I come from.”

“ Where you live ? ”

“ Hudson—in the Western Reserve.”

“ Everybody free ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Golly, I ’d like to live there—nobody does any work! ”

“ Of course they work.”

“ But not if they don’t want ? ”

“ No, they can be idle if they prefer.”

“ If I lived there would I be free ? ”

“ Certainly! ”

“ Well, I reckon I ’ll go,” said Slivers with a chuckle.

Slivers had no idea of going, but unwittingly the white boy had sown dragons’ teeth, which when the time was ripe were to spring up into armed men.

John was sitting on the ground, his back against the fence. Involuntarily he stood up; the lady on the veranda was looking at him. She beckoned him to come to her. He did so and removed his cap as he approached. The lady motioned him to a seat and said: “ Are you the boy that led the cattle by a little while ago ? ”

“ Yes, ma’am.”

“ He came a hundred miles alone,” called Colonel Silverton, who rode up just then on horseback.

“ Indeed! ”

"Yes, I knew you would like to see him—he 's going to stay to dinner; here, Slivers!"

Slivers was making busy pretense of pulling weeds for a lot of pigs that stood with their front feet on top of a pen, squealing loudly.

Slivers came forward and took the horse.

"Yes, Belle, a hundred miles and only fifteen years old."

"Fifteen—going on sixteen," corrected John, without a smile.

"Why, neither George nor James could do that—I would n't trust 'em with a sheep! You are always so interested in queer specimens—I knew you would like him."

"Is he French, Canadian, or Pennsylvania Dutch?" asked the lady.

"Dutch! ha, ha!—he 's a Yank—a full-blooded Yank."

"Maurice, you should not speak so before him, it may hurt his feelings."

"I 'm not ashamed of being a Yankee," said the boy, with a quiet show of pride.

"Listen to that! Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Colonel.

"My ancestors came over in the Mayflower, I 'm a descendant of Philip Brown," continued the boy.

The Colonel tried to laugh again, but the mirth was hardly a success.

"What is his name?" asked the lady of her husband.

"Smith, John Smith."

"Brown," corrected the boy.

"Margaret, my dear, come here, please."

A young girl came out—a sort of second edition of her mother—only with a bloom of health on her cheeks. She wore a blue dress, too, and John's quick glance told

him that she was a lady also—the second he had ever seen.

“Margaret, this is John Brown; he has brought cattle to your father a hundred miles, all alone.”

“How do you do, John Brown? I hope you are well—but you must be very tired after so long a march.”

John tried to speak; he had never in his life calculated his words; this time he wished he had. He answered:

“Our folks are well, thank you—how are your folks?”

He felt his face burning and for the first time in his life he was embarrassed. He had never yet quailed before the glance of man, woman or beast; like the Indians with whom he had associated, he had the dignity and the grace of a nude statue.

But now, like Adam and Eve in the presence of God, he was ashamed. He would have run away if he dared; he tried to speak again, to apologize and go, but he only sat, and the impassive yellow of his long face, with its peaked chin and curved nose, burned scarlet.

He was a man.

The father, mother and daughter were discussing the boy—he dared not look up.

“But they all came from England,” he heard the young girl say; “some landed at Plymouth and some at Jamestown.”

“Yes, but one class belonged to the nobility and the other was the dregs of creation.”

“Oh, that is too strong, Papa—you forget Oliver Cromwell.”

“My, but the girl is getting along in her history.”

The bell rang for dinner, to the great relief of John Brown. The dinner was the most stately, courtly and uncomfortable affair that he had ever known.

Colonel Silverton sat at one end of the large table, his

wife at the other. On one side sat John and Miss Margaret; on the other, two big slouching boys who were introduced as George and James. They stared at John, whispered together and then fell a-laughing.

No grace was said. Behind the master of the house stood Slivers with a big tray ready to carry each plate to the proper person when it was filled. And considering the size of the table, John thought this was quite a necessary proceeding. Margaret was evidently a year or two older than John, but she appeared to him like a full-grown woman, and he noticed with inward discomfort that she treated him as though he were a little boy. George had a downy mustache and was evidently near twenty. James was about eighteen.

John could not eat much, neither could he talk; his pride of birth was gone, and the trip through from Hudson alone had dwindled into nothingness — he only wanted to get away into the woods alone.

Slivers stood, too solemn by half, behind his master's chair. He watched his chance, held up the marble that John had given him, and winked. But John could not smile back.

As soon as the others had pushed their chairs back he walked hurriedly to the veranda, put on his coonskin cap, and then putting his head in the door called "Good-bye!" and started down the front path.

"Hold on there, Timothy, hold on! come back here! come back!" shouted the Colonel.

John came slowly back.

"Where you going?"

"Home."

"What's the hurry—we want you to stay all night—wait until to-morrow morning and take an early start."

"Yes, wait until to-morrow," added Mrs. Silverton.

The father, mother, two sons and daughter stood bare-headed on the veranda. They looked at the stripling in wonderment—he was a curiosity—a novelty; they desired to look him over as they might some strange wild animal, before allowing it to escape to its native jungle. As deer, pressed by necessity, sometimes run into villages, or wild birds fly in at open windows, so this strange specimen of humanity had strayed into their midst.

The Colonel smiled indulgently and held out his hand as though tempting a cow with salt. George and James coughed, Margaret and her mother beamed sympathy and compassion from four blue eyes that matched the blue of their dresses. Behind all grinned the speckled face of Slivers as he held up the yellow marble in token of eternal friendship.

John came back in very hang-dog fashion. He noticed only two points; these were that Margaret and her mother were exactly the same height and that the dresses were doubtless cut from one piece.

“Please say it quick,” said John, “I’ve got to make twelve miles to-night!”

“Listen to that!” laughed the Colonel.

“I have no time to waste,” continued the youth. His dignity was coming back.

“Where you going to stay to-night?”

“At Big Tree Clearing.”

“Not in that Indian town?”

“Yes, with Blackfoot, the chief.”

“Wall, if you was starting for Big Tree, why was you going back to town? It’s two o’clock now and ’t will be dark ’fore you get through.”

“I was going to exchange these ribbons,” replied the boy, holding up a small package he held in his hand.

“Who are they for?”

Of course the great Colonel Silverton had no interest in these trivialities; he was only supplying amusement for his family.

“ One is for Ruth Crosby and the other is for little Rachel. I got two yards of red ribbon—a yard for each—I ’m going to take it back and get blue. Do you think the man will be mad if I ask him to change it ? ”

“ Oh no, he will change it for you,” said Mrs. Silverton.

“ What else is in your package ? ”

“ Handkerchers—handkerchers for my brothers and sisters—seven on ’em. See the letters and pictures—are n’t they nice ? ”

Mrs. Silverton admired the flimsy little presents. George and James laughed.

“ But who is the Ruth you spoke of ? ”

“ Why, don’t you know ? But I forgot, of course you don’t—why, Ruth is—is—is—why, she is Widow Crosby and she teaches school and takes care of folks when they are sick or in trouble, and when women or babies die she lays ’em out.”

“ What a queer person she must be; and Rachel is your sister, I suppose ? ”

“ Why, yes, not exactly, though; she is Ruth’s little girl, she is nine going on ten.”

“ So you will not stay all night ? ”

“ No.”

“ But you will when you come again ? ”

“ Yes, perhaps.”

“ And if you bring cattle fetch them right here to me—I will pay you more than anyone else.”

“ You will be sure to make this your home when you are in Zanesville ! ” said Mrs. Silverton.

“ Yes, thank you, but I must go now.”

“ Hold on, aint you going to shake hands before you go ? ”

John stood on the ground and solemnly reached up his big, bony hand. He had outgrown his jacket so the sleeves were short, and there showed a long length of red, sinewy wrist.

Each shook hands with him.

“ Take care of that money, Timothy—your father has n’t any too much, I reckon—good-bye,” said the Colonel.

“ You will come again, John Brown, won’t you ? ” said Margaret.

“ If the Lord wills ! ” answered John. And this made them all laugh, all save Margaret. John noted this and thought of it afterward. Slivers laughed louder than all ; the Colonel turned and made a kick at him, and if his boot had hit the mark it might have meant the loss of valuable property.

John walked rapidly, and very awkwardly, down the hill. He unconsciously lifted his feet as if walking through plowed ground, for he knew that seven persons were intently watching him from the veranda.

“ Let ’s set the dog on him,” cried George.

“ All right—let ’s : how he will scamper ! ”

“ He might kill your dog and come back and thrash you both ! ” rebukingly said the Colonel, as the party strolled into the house.

The Yankee boy went to the big store and the ribbon was exchanged without a question. The proprietor even asked him to call again. This pleased the boy and raised his spirits a little : his heart was heavy, for he felt that he had been trifled with.

He started off out of the village. Up at the top of the hill he stopped and looked back. Below lay the

town—a very Babel of sounds and commotion, thought the boy. He was glad to get away. He plunged into the forest and followed the narrow road on an easy half run and walk, such as the Indians had taught him.

He had gone perhaps two miles when he heard the clatter of hoofs behind him. He felt to see that his money was safe and then stood still. The quick hoof-beats came nearer and the boy withdrew into the bushes to let the horseman pass. As the galloping horse appeared, John peered out and was surprised to see that the rider was Slivers, on the Colonel's horse. Slivers's feet could not reach the stirrups, so the stirrups dangled and swung with every plunge. As the horse and rider flew past, John stepped out and called.

Slivers drew in on the curb bit and showed, as he swung the animal around by a neck-rein twist, that he was an experienced horseman.

"Oh, I was afraid I'd miss you!" gasped the colored boy. His countenance had a bluish tinge and would have been pale had he not been a mulatto.

"Say, Yank," he continued, "you must do something—I don't know what—George and James are going to rob you. I heard 'em plan it in the hay mow—they are going on horseback by the East Road and lay for you at the Gorge. I must hurry back or they will miss me—I was only sent to the blacksmith shop with this here horse."

The horse and rider started back on a canter and left John Brown staring after, standing in the middle of the road.

CHAPTER III

OLD BLACKFOOT FOILS AN AMBUSCADE

JOHN BROWN stood still until the sound of the galloping horse had died a way.

“Huh! Slivers is a fool—I’d like to see ’em rob me! I’ll get a club and fight the two of ’em.”

He started ahead on a walk.

The lad was no coward. An ancestry of five generations that had fought wild beasts, savages and men, and that had coped with Nature in all her savage moods, had bred in his blood a calm indifference to danger. In fact to those early settlers danger was the norm and safety the extraordinary.

Afraid? not he; he was brother to the panther; his nerves were the nerves of a bear; and in his nature, as in the nature of all men who roam wild forests, there was the cunning of the fox. He pitted his craftiness against the untamed forces of crude Nature or against those finer forces of nature manifest in brute and man.

But as he walked he pondered.

He had asked and urged his father for the privilege of making this trip alone. The young delight in their strength, and the first foretaste of coming power is sweet. He knew he could drive those cattle to Zanesville, a hundred miles; he knew he could sell them and bring the money safely home; he craved that he might be allowed to do it.

All had gone well so far; in two more days he would walk into his father’s house; he would lay the money on the table. His father would say little, but he would be very proud of him; and all the children would crowd around and get their presents, and he would give them

each one of the funny handkerchiefs, and tell them of the wonderful things he had seen. Then he would go over to Ruth's little home behind the church and she would kiss him, and he would kiss little Rachel, and then he would give them the blue ribbon and they would all be very happy.

Ah! but suppose he was waylaid and robbed! The pictured handkerchiefs would be stolen, the ribbon, too, and all the money—and then how dared he go home and confess that he had not been able to care for himself?

He started forward on a trot. Then he stopped and took the money out and looked at it; he opened the parcel in which the handkerchiefs were tied; he counted them. Yes, there were still six, none had been stolen; he looked at the ribbon and made sure there were two full yards, and the color blue.

There was little breeze through that long aisle of stately trees—it was warm. He took off his jacket and cap and tied them in a bundle with a twist of hickory bark; he changed the trot to an Indian lope, and when he came to a stream where there was a wide shallow ford he knew that he had come five miles.

He took off his shoes and the cool water was very refreshing to his feet. He wished to sit down on a big boulder that was in mid stream and watch the snake-feeders as they circled around, and the kingfisher that sat on a dead limb, and the minnows that swam in the eddies where the water was deep. But there was no time for that now, the Gorge was seven miles beyond; he must pass it before dark.

He bathed his hands in the water, and lay flat down on the bank and drank and then soused his head under. When he arose the water ran dripping down his long hair that was matted over his head.

The sun was sinking behind the hills. He hastened his steps. The miles were slipping behind, but the sun kept going down, and down, and down. It was a great golden ball hung in the heavens by an invisible thread. The boy kept looking over his shoulder as he ran, and saw that the ball kept dropping. The edge touched the tree-tops and sank lower; when he looked again the upper rim had dropped clear from sight and there were only great red streaks marking the spot where it had disappeared.

The Gorge was yet two miles away.

The East Road was a little farther than the road our lad traversed; these roads joined but a short distance beyond the Gorge. This gorge was a narrow ravine—seemingly an immense fissure in the stratum of sandstone; a stream had run through it years before, but now it was only a dry bed of gravel with perpendicular walls of solid rock on either side.

The boy felt sure that these degenerate sons of Colonel Silverton would calculate on his walking not more than four miles an hour, and at this rate he would not be due at the spot for some time.

The question was whether he should go straight ahead and run the risk of their meeting him, or should he make a detour of the dangerous spot. As to which was the safer course there was no doubt, but youth always delights in taking chances.

John cut a two-foot length of wild cherry an inch and a half thick and started ahead on a brisk run. Outside of the ravine it was barely dusk, inside it was gloomy, and the darkness seemed to have been pushed over the top and tramped down.

The boy eased his pace to a slow walk to show himself that he was not afraid. He started to whistle, but con-

cluded he had better not. He moved forward, warding off the dark by swinging his club; soon light shone through at the other end—it grew larger and the lad took longer breaths.

He was safely through—the danger lay behind.

“Slivers lied to me—that ’s what he did. But then I would rather Slivers would tell me I was going to be robbed, and lie, than to say I would be robbed, and tell the truth. Still the Bible says we should not lie—ah, here is the cross track coming down the hill from the East Road.”

He sat down on a big flat stone to rest—he listened—then he got down on his knees and laid his ear to the ground.

“Someone is coming—*two* someones.”

The rhythmic patter of hoofs on the dry earth could plainly be heard. They came nearer and nearer. John crept back into the bushes. In five minutes two men on horseback came down the hill through the trees, turned into the main road, and passed within ten feet of where the boy lay.

They were George and James Silverton.

George carried a shotgun on the pommel of his saddle. As they moved slowly by John caught the words:

“He won’t be here for at least half an hour yet.”

“No, we are in time—we will catch him at this end of the Gorge.”

“You ’ll hold the gun on him, and if he runs, shoot.”

The voices died away into a murmur. John moved along for a hundred yards in the edge of the bushes, then slipped off his shoes and, carrying them in his hand, started on a run for the Indian village two miles beyond.

When he reached the two or three log huts and the collection of bark teepees, he was greeted by a full half

dozen dogs. He gave a whoop and a call in Indian tongue to announce his coming; a squaw came out and drove the dogs away with a stick. Old Chief Blackfoot was sitting by a camp-fire hugging his knees and scarcely looked up as the boy approached, but seeing who it was out of the corner of his eye, he grunted:

"How, how, Little Blue, you come heap soon—you deer foot—run fast."

"Yes, Father, I ran fast; they tried to rob me—they are up at the Gorge now."

"Ho, ho! I thought Little Blue no 'fraid of dark?"

"I 'm not afraid of the dark, but I tell you there are robbers up there."

Blue was as near Brown as old Chief Blackfoot could come; he respected the Browns and during several hard winters had been supplied with provisions by "Big Blue," to whom he applied for help when times were hard. For "Little Blue" he had a genuine affection, and when he got it through his stupid head that someone had tried to waylay the lad, he sprang up all alert.

He soon understood the case and called to three ragged and dirty "bucks" sitting near, to whom he explained the situation in rapid lingo.

It was not pure philanthropy or friendship that stirred Old Blackfoot to action; it was rather that the piping times of peace which had recently been enforced on him were not to his taste, and he jumped at the chance of a little adventure.

He issued an order to one of the bucks. The Indian at once picked up a big coil of hay rope that lay near, and like a spirit disappeared in the darkness.

In ten minutes more they started—three bucks, five squaws, half a dozen Indian children, and one white boy.

John insisted that guns and bows and arrows should be left behind, for he wanted no murder.

The bare feet and the moccasins made not the faintest sound as they moved on down the road like a group of gray ghosts towards the Gorge.

Not a word was spoken.

As they neared the ravine the women and children were signaled to remain behind. They sat down in the middle of the road as if camping out for the night, each holding fast to the neck of a dog. The three Indians and Little Blue skirted the track through the trees and approached the Gorge. The neigh of a horse was heard and the attempt of the rider to quiet him and stop his pawing.

"It 's time he was here," said James in an undertone that came clear and distinct through the silent night.

"Yes, but we rode on a gallop most of the way!"

"D' ye think he has two hundred dollars?"

"Fully that—if he fights shall we kill him?"

"Well, not exactly kill him—but then he 's only a Yank anyway, you know. I 'll tell you what we 'll do —"

But he did not tell. At a signal from Old Blackfoot four stones went whizzing at the horsemen and four voices sent up a wild yell followed with a ki, yi, yi, ki, yi, yi, that awoke the echoes for miles about.

Before the Indians could spring into the road the frantic horses had shot down through the narrow ravine in a mad race for life, their hoofs sending a shower of gravel through the branches of the scrubby oaks on either side.

Little Blue's club flew through the air towards the fleeing horsemen; the dogs were at their heels.

The squaws and children had disobeyed orders and

crawled up, evidently as the men had, and they all rushed with shouts and yells pell-mell into the Gorge, the barking dogs clear ahead in hot pursuit.

The clattering hoofs suddenly ceased; there was that wild scream of a falling horse which very few men ever hear, and as the mob of yelling Indians emerged with a rush from the ravine and passed down the road, they saw ahead two men scramble onto one horse and disappear, like a shadow, into the night.

A squaw who had taken her skirts under her arm and run like a sprinter, outstripping all the rest, turned a double somersault in the road and all the Indians stopped and laughed.

The moon's faint rays were coming over the hill: they showed a dead horse in the middle of the road. Little Blue put down his hand and felt a hay rope stretched tightly from tree to tree just where the knees of a horse would strike it.

"Ugh! Dam — no luck — me want two blankets!" grunted Old Blackfoot.

The squaws took the saddle, bridle and halter from the dead horse. The blanket that was beneath the saddle Old Blackfoot appropriated for himself and wrapped it around his form after the manner of a Roman Senator. Ten feet away in the edge of the bushes was a shotgun — one of the squaws found it. The chief at once took it away from her and gave the gun to Little Blue. The lad turned it over to the woman's husband, the man who had gone ahead and tied the rope across the road.

The saddle was taken apart, two Indians each taking a stirrup, another the seat, and another the crupper. The bridle and halter were also separated into parts as much as buckles would allow; the tail and mane were cut off from the dead horse and the spoils were then

distributed by the chief, even the children having a share.

All took hold and dragged the carcass of the horse into the bushes and the march for home was begun.

“ Ugh ! ” said Chief Blackfoot as they dived into the blackness of the Gorge, “ Ugh, me no luck since pale-face come—dam ! ”

CHAPTER IV

THE DEACON DOES A-WOOING GO

EIGHT years before, John's mother had died. To be motherless is the saddest condition that comes to youthful mortals on earth ; but fate is seldom wholly cruel : John went straight to Ruth Crosby and sobbed the keen edge off his desolation, sitting on her lap with his arms about her neck. Sleep, kindly sleep, comes to stricken childhood, just as the kindly sleep of death comes to take the burden from grown folks when the load grows too heavy to bear.

Ruth undressed the boy and laid him beside her own chubby little darling, who was clasping a rag doll in her sleep and dreaming the dreams of babyhood.

Ruth tucked them in, and as she looked at the fresh, innocent faces she sighed and said :

“ I wonder if they too must journey by the thorn road as the years go by ! ”

She undressed there in the moonlight and lay down on the bed that stood beside the other.

When she awoke the sunlight was streaming in through the sliding window, and in the trundle bed John, Rachel, and the rag doll were making a house out of the bed-clothes, and chatting merrily ; Rachel repeating the

words for the doll, who was tongue-tied and could not talk.

“ Are you 'wake, Ruth ? ” called John.

“ Yes.”

“ Well, Rachel says I 'm to be your boy and you are to be my mother—aint it nice ? ”

“ Yes, my boy, I asked your father, and he says you may stay here.”

A few weeks after this Deacon Brown came to call one evening; quite smiling, he was, for a widower. He wore a “ biled shirt,” squeaky boots, and had had his whiskers shaved after the manner of the giddy youth of that day and generation. Everyone in the village knew that he had called on the Widow Crosby on a week day, and that he wore his “ other clothes.” But no one knew exactly what the conversation was that took place.

In four weeks thereafter Deacon Brown was married to a widow about his own age: a worthy woman who had seen hard work and trouble and all the privation that comes to the lot of pioneers. She was not a “ smart ” woman, but she did her duty as she saw it, and entered on her new life with the Christian determination to bear and forbear. Her goodly flock, added to the Browns, made quite a house-full, and no one urged that a certain little stray called John Brown should come back from the fold where he had found shelter. So John staid at Ruth's, and cut her wood, and made garden, and she taught him to read and write and “ do sums ”; and every other morning he went over to his father's and was set to work at some task. For the labor of children is their parents' right: no one ever doubted that until yesterday. Children were once a good financial investment. You cared for them until they were about ten years old (or less), and after that you owned everything that they pro-

duced until noon on the day when the boy was twenty-one and the girl eighteen.

It does not "pay" to raise children now—they are a serious bill of expense, and the advice to give a man about to start family life is, "don't."

But blood is stronger than finance, and even in New England there is yet marrying and giving in marriage; but the average number of children to each couple has been cut down to three, whereas in 1810 it was eight.

Deacon Brown prospered in worldly affairs. His calm, judicial quality of mind easily crowned him as First Citizen of the place: he was Deacon, Justice of the Peace, School Trustee and Postmaster. His tannery brought him a goodly income, and while his flocks and herds did not cover a thousand hills, yet for the time and place they were large.

The Judsons plodded along after their kind. They had the reputation of being "nice folks," but "shiftless"; yet they always had enough to eat, and they could not get very much in debt, even if they wished, for there was no one to trust them. Jedediah became a preacher of considerable power—that is he preached loud and he preached long—and no one doubted his earnestness. His personality was not strong enough to crowd Deacon Brown, who practically ran the church (for a church, like every other institution, must be managed by a one-man power if it flourishes), and so he kept his place and also established other churches in settlements round about, acting as missionary and circuit rider.

When Jedediah was absent on "Lord's Day" Deacon Brown would conduct the services, and instead of preaching a sermon of his own, he would read one by Jonathan Edwards. And it was whispered about that Deacon

Brown kept the Reverend Judson out on the circuit considerable more than was meet.

One fine day when the young circuit rider rode into town there was seated on a pillion behind him, with her arms tightly clasped around his waist, a blooming, buxom young woman.

The children in the street saw them coming and straightway ran into the houses to tell their respective mothers. And as the preacher rode forward on a slow trot, up the street, he passed in review before dozens of eyes that peeked through fences, over fences, under fences, from windows and from behind doors.

The good women of the place were warm with indignation at the scandalous proceeding. The old horse and his two riders stopped in front of the grocery, and Deacon Brown was called out. The blushing young woman (still holding tight-fast, because in her embarrassment she had forgotten to let go) was introduced as Jedediah's wife. The Deacon would have kissed her, but the horse was full sixteen hands. The explanation was made that they had been married that same day. The preacher then headed the horse for the two-room log cabin of Widow Crosby. In response to the "Hello!" the widow came out, and Jedediah said, "This is my wife," giving the young woman behind a gentle jab in the ribs with his elbow.

Contrary to Jedediah's expectation, Ruth shook hands cordially with them both, wishing them long life and much happiness. Then they rode to the Judsons', where they dismounted and going in made this parent nest their home for the time being.

The good women of the place were not at all appeased, even when they knew that the buxom young woman was the legal wife of the man to whom she clung (through

evil and good report), as they rode that first morning, when for them the world was young. Yet all of these women at times rode on pillions, and all clung to their husbands when there was danger of sliding off, and such as had no husbands clung also, only instead of putting their arms around the man's waist they put their hands on his shoulders, and this was the distinguishing feature between the wedded and the soon-to-be.

The wrath of these women was kindled, and that not a little, for "what right has the pastor nohow to go off and git married without saying nothing to nobody!"

All were very angry, save one—that one was Ruth Crosby.

Jedediah had followed her with his leering looks, until a week before she had requested him not to come to her house.

His rhinoceros hide was stung at last. And when he saw Liza Ann, the blooming daughter of Joshua Hoskins, at whose house he was stopping, the bleeding of his broken heart ceased. The girl was younger than Ruth; she was prettier than Ruth; she was bigger than Ruth.

Jedediah looked at her across the supper table, and ate the salt pork and dock greens, and she colored and simpered a bit just as buxom young women of eighteen will; and he decided then and there that he would marry Liza Ann if her folks were willing.

After the supper things were done, he broached the subject to her father. The family sat around and listened. That a preacher should select Liza Ann for a wife was very flattering to the house of Hoskins. To make the matter secure, Jedediah explained that he had had the young lady in mind for a year; he had prayed over the subject earnestly and now was acting as the Lord directed.

Mr. Hoskins had only lived in the neighborhood six months, but he was not given to quibble: he gave the couple his hearty blessing and the bride a feather bed.

So the next day they rode to a certain "Elder" who lived a few miles away; and then on to Hudson, where they arrived all as herein truthfully recorded.

All that morning as they rode, the bridegroom's thoughts dwelt more on another woman than on his newly wedded wife. He thought of Ruth Crosby and chuckled to himself as he anticipated the look of surprise and pain that would sweep over her face when he presented his new wife.

But alas, it is the unexpected that happens—we know everything but the obvious! All the women in town were surprised and all were pained, save Ruth alone.

Yet surprise is transient and pain does not last forever. The women gradually got over their wrath, and the men held a bee and built a parsonage: and the women furnished it, for mortals like ants only do good work collectively.

The preacher and his wife moved in.

In a year they were blessed with twins.

Another year passed and a third child came.

The bloom on the cheek of the parson's wife had gone; the simper had changed to a scowl; the laughing eyes had lost their twinkle; the roundness of her form gave place to angularity; and her voice grew loud and discordant. She worked and toiled in house and field trying to make both ends meet. Of course she scolded. When fate is unkind, men swear and get drunk, but a woman can only scold. It is her right. The worst condition that overtook Saul, who came from Tarsus, in all his tragic career was when he was chained to a Roman; a dull, unsympathetic, bestial Roman soldier.

Liza Ann Hoskins might have made a gentle, worthy woman, but being chained to Jedediah Judson she developed into a shrew, and lucky it was for her that the ducking stool had been left in Connecticut. She ruled Jedediah as one having authority: she said to this one go, and he cometh, and to that one, come, and he goeth. For scolding women never accomplish their desire. The diplomacy of a coquette counts for more than the imperious threats of a shrew. Threatened people live long.

As for Ruth Crosby, her face grew white, people thought. Yet she was not ill. A few traces of silver were seen among the coils of her dark-brown hair. She lived in her little cottage with its snug garden behind; she had her cow and chickens and a little flock of sheep. She taught the village school, and tended the sick, and closed the eyes of the dying. And once when there was a case of smallpox at a house in the edge of the clearing, she let John Brown and Rachel go to a neighbor's, and she was nurse and doctor to the patient until he got well.

She was not happy—who is? but she had pleasures, for she knew what it was to do good work.

Up in her garret, where it was not high enough to stand up straight, slept John Brown. He really didn't know which was home, this or his father's. Perhaps he liked Ruth's house best. Thus stood matters in the year 1815: that day when John came in and saw Ruth and little Rachel all a-smiling—when he gave them each a yard of blue ribbon that he had fetched clear from Zanesville, a hundred miles away.

CHAPTER V

JOHN MEETS TROUBLE, AND FACES IT

JOHN BROWN arrived home on schedule time, and duly gave out his pictured handkerchiefs and blue ribbon. Squire Brown counted the money—it was right to a cent—he patted the boy on the head and gave him a silver quarter for his very own. The dignified Justice of the Peace thought it best not to praise the lad to his face—it might make him vain, but he promised the boy that some time he might go again. And after all, this was the richest reward he could possibly have paid.

Not a word did John say to anyone of the attempted robbery. He was too shrewd for that: to explain that the money came near being taken away from him would have placed a veto on any further trips alone. His father was from Connecticut, and loved a dollar on this side of idolatry as much as any. John kept still.

Then it was not much of an adventure anyway. Several good men and true, who lived in the village, daily told tales of strife twice as great as this: these men loved a lie for its own sake, and this quiet boy felt too deeply to think of going into competition with the village romancer by displaying his truth alongside of the other's fiction.

He told Ruth of the beautiful lady he had seen, and of her beautiful daughter, and how they both wore blue dresses, and how they shook hands with him; and he held out his hand to show by way of proof. Little Rachel took the hand, holding onto the fingers, and looked it over solemnly.

The village of Hudson had grown until there were twenty-five houses, and not all were made from logs

either, for there was a saw-mill down by the river now. But yet no one kept servants—all did their own work, except in case of sickness, and then neighbors came in and did it for them. No one had a big long veranda, and surely no woman in Hudson had a beautiful blue dress and white shawl: and even if she had she would not have had time to sit on the veranda and look pretty!

And then the colored boy who waited on table, who was n't colored so awful much, for he was nearly white, and all the other colored folks that John had caught glimpses of, all were very funny. Ruth and Rachel were much interested, and so were the neighbor women who dropped in. John told it all several times over, describing the house, the pictures on the walls, the furniture and dishes and silverware, always ending by saying, "They all shook hands with me and said I must come again." John had gained in strength as the years passed. He was tall and slender, but very wiry. At wrestling and foot racing he could beat many boys who were older than he, but yet he was a "woman's boy," and he would always rather play with girls than boys. This had given him a gentleness and withal a modest dignity that made him the butt of the jokers at the grocery, but it gained him the admiration of the discerning.

He was religious through and through. Not a trace of skepticism had ever blown across his soul; he had a simple, childish faith in an overruling Providence that watches our every act. "Whatever is, is best," is a grim doctrine, but it breeds the sternest kind of courage in a man; and he who can cling to it through life's vicissitudes is a fool—or else a saint in whose breast there throbs a lion's heart.

Squire Brown was considerable of a speculator, and the success of his son in selling the last lot of cattle

induced him to try it again. From settlers around he purchased a drove of a dozen beef cattle, and instructing John to sell them for twenty-five dollars each or drive them back, the lad started away. By picking out the probable leader of the drove and leading him with a rope the others would follow behind, with the assistance of an occasional nip from Simon, the Scotch Collie.

Then in a new country cattle are not given to straying—they stick to the drove. Unlike the cattle of the plains, domesticated cattle in a wooded country rather implore the protection of man than disclaim it. Cows know a deal of natural history, and if they could talk, what legends they could give of calves that strayed away and were devoured by wolves; or sick cows for which wild beasts lay in wait day after day, waiting until the protection of the horns and hoofs of her mates was out of the way!

The journey to Zanesville was not difficult. It was divided up into stages of ten or fifteen miles a day. Each night there was a settler's cabin, where the boy was made thrice welcome and his cattle were yarded. The stock was driven slowly and allowed to graze along the way in bottom-lands and open spaces, so that they would arrive in good condition.

The night before Zanesville was reached John stopped at the Indian village.

Chief Blackfoot looked at the youth in disapproval, and the squaws walked around him and felt him over with smiles of wonderment. The cause of all this was that the boy had exchanged buckskin for homespun, and the coonskin cap had been replaced with a man's broad-brim, felt hat. Only a month had passed, and aside from the change in raiment, cubits had been added to the boy's stature. As a sudden jar will at the right time turn a

liquid to a crystal, or a severe experience turn dark hair to white in a single day, so there are times in the life of man when the soul moves onward with a bound. We grow by throes and throbs.

At daylight John left the Indian village with his cattle. By noon he stood on the hilltop and looked down on the "city." It was the world—the great, busy, seething, active world of men, of which he was now a part!

His eye ran across to the east. There on the hillside above the town, stood Silverside, the homestead of Colonel Silverton; behind the house were the white-washed "quarters" of the servants; to the left the barn, the carriage house and cattle pens.

The boy's heart beat fast.

Whom did he wish to see there? Why, Colonel Silverton, of course, to whom he expected to sell the cattle. And then Jim Slivers, too, for he had neglected to thank the colored boy that day when he warned him of the plot that had been laid to rob him. Above all, he wanted to face George and James Silverton—to look them squarely in the eye and show them he was neither a fool nor a coward. It was unchristian to fight, but he would like to wrestle either one or both, and he would cross-buttock them onto their heads in a way that would make them see stars.

Then he wanted to see Mrs. Silverton. He liked the lady and yet he was piqued to think how patronizingly she had treated him, and Margaret had been even more condescending. He was now positively offended to think that she had treated him as if he were a little boy. She was a young lady, as tall as her mother, a little more slender, perhaps, and her blue dress came only to her shoe tops, but she was a young lady and she had almost talked baby talk to him.

He disliked her heartily.

And yet—he did wish his hair would not stand up so bristling all over his head! Ruth had barbered him and the cut was too short; his hair was as obstinate as a balky mule, so it was! He took off his hat and tried to smooth it down with his hand, but it was hardly a success.

The sun was hot and John did not care to enter town in his shirt sleeves. He was too proud of his coat for that. The thought occurred to him that he could remove the woolen shirt and wear only the vest and coat—the vest being cut high in the neck anyway. So the shirt was removed, and hidden in the bushes where he could find it on the way back. The vest was then put on and buttoned down the front with its row of sixteen buck-horn buttons, the coat was put on and the line of march moved forward.

Jim Slivers saw him coming and ran down the road to meet him. The slave boy was frightened and his freckles stood out like daubs of brown paint.

“Stop! you must go back—you won’t tell on me, will you?—they ’ll kill me if you do—they ’ll kill me!” groaned Slivers.

“Tell them that you warned me?—never, never, here ’s my hand.”

The slave boy clung to the proffered hand with both his own and cried over it.

“I run Marse’s horse to cotch you that day ’til he was all foam, and when I got back I got licked awful for it. I tole Marse that I run a race with another boy, and he licked me with a stirrup strap.”

“Did George and James come home all right?”

“Got home on one horse, the other was stole from ’em—robbers stretched a rope ’cross the road, and they rode agin it in the dark and they was robbed of their watches

and money and one horse—that 's what they told their father—they was chasing a horse thief, they said—say? ”

“ Well, what is it ? ”

“ You was n't one of the robbers, was you ? ”

“ I, I a robber ? Who says I robbed them ? ”

“ George says so—he saw you in the moonlight—you and a lot of Injuns.”

“ No, I did not rob them, and I don't run away. I am going to see the Colonel.”

“ What for ? ”

“ To tell him the truth.”

“ Then he will kill me.”

“ But I will not mention you.”

John pushed by the slave boy, on up past the house, and placed his cattle in one of the pens. He saw no one about, so walked over and sat down on the veranda to wait for the Colonel. Soon a step was heard behind him and Margaret came through the door.

“ This is Mr. Smith, I believe—there is such a resemblance—I hope your brother is well ! ”

John arose with a jerk, stuttered, bowed twice, sat down with a jolt and said his brother was well and so were his sisters. He twirled his broad-brim hat nervously.

“ Are your brothers well ? ” he asked after a painful pause. It was pure accident—he did not mean to mention them at all.

“ Quite well, thank you—it was a long trip for him to make alone, and so young ! ”

John did not get the import of the remark, so he changed the subject.

“ I want to see your father—will he be here soon ? ”

It was not necessary for her to reply. The one, two, three, four of the Colonel's single-footer was heard on the

hard road, and the next instant he reined in at the driveway.

“Slivers—you, Jim Slivers! where the devil is that nigger?—Slivers!”

Slivers slid slowly around the corner of the house—all of a tremble. He led the horse away.

“This is Mr. Smith, Papa; you remember his brother.”

“What the devil—why, it’s Timothy himself—ha, ha, ha, ha!!”

He stood the boy up and looked him over.

“It’s Timothy himself, with his father’s shad-belly coat and a Puritan parson’s hat! ha, ha, ha, ha!!”

In fact it was funny. The coat had long tails running down to a point behind; the ample vest buttoned to the chin; both garments were cut large, in anticipation of future growth.

Mrs. Silverton stepped out on the veranda: both she and the daughter looked on in amazement.

“Sit down, Timothy—sit down, I say—I’ve been wanting to see you—Lord, but you have impudence to come straight back here again after robbing my sons. You Yankees are so rabid for money that you steal from your best friends. You thought you were not known, of course, I see, but now I’ve got you—George, George, George—where the devil is that rascal! Here you, George, do you identify this fellow as one of the gang that robbed you and stole your horse?”

“He’s the one,” said George doggedly.

“I’m the one *you* tried to rob,” retorted young Brown with flashing eyes.

“You lie,” screamed the other, and as he spoke he snatched the riding whip from his father’s hand and made a savage stroke with it at John’s face.

He dodged the slash and sprang to the ground from the piazza. He stripped the long coat off in a twinkling.

"Come on!" said John Brown, "come on—here on the grass, you coward!" And as he spoke the vest was peeled off too. There he stood, stripped to the waist. He had totally forgotten the fact that he wore no shirt.

"Why don't you come down here, you coward!"

A shout of laughter went up from the Colonel. It ended in a half-suppressed whistle of admiration, in which the two ladies joined, in sentiment at least. Had it been a shirtless man there in front of them, they might have thrown their aprons over their faces and rushed into the house. But this was only a boy; besides, the thing was surprisingly sudden. His muscles stood out like whip-cord: not an ounce of superfluous tissue was there: the flesh was lean and clean as ever an athlete knew. His shoulders were not broad, but the chest was deep, the neck strongly corded, and beneath the pink skin of the breast the muscles twitched in nervous restlessness as he stood there in the sunshine, his straight, short hair all bristling.

"You'd look better with a shirt on," bawled George.

A blush went over the boy's face, it spread to his neck and suffused itself to his waistband.

"Here, my son, put on your clothes!"

Mrs. Silverton had stepped down on the grass and picked up the vest, and held it so the boy could put it on. Then she helped him to don the coat. She turned to her husband:

"Maurice, why do you accuse this lad?"

Margaret was crying:

"You are awful wicked, Papa Silverton, and you too, George—I don't like you either one"—she boohoo'd.

John was now clothed and partially in his right mind.

“ Say now, Timothy Hymnbook, come now and give us the facts. Why did you say my boys tried to rob you ? ”

“ Because they did. ”

“ Now we will call them in—they will tell their story and you tell yours. James, you James and George, come here! Daughter, go tell the boys I want them ! ”

The girl went into the house. She was gone several minutes, and then came back and reported that the boys could not be found.

“ It ’s queer, George was here a minute ago, and you said James was around somewhere ? ”

“ Why, yes. ”

Slivers’s freckled face popped out from behind the door :

“ I know where they ’s gone, Marse Kuhnel ! I know, I do. They scooted ! James, he hide in the haymow when Mister Himbooks he come—just now they got their horses outer the back barn door and tole me they was gwine to de Fort and would n’t be back for a week ! ”

“ Shut up, you black rascal—you ’d talk the horns off a mooley bull ! For Heaven’s sake, Mother, shake up them niggers,—aint dinner ready ? ”

CHAPTER VI

A LITERARY COURTSHIP

SOMEWAY the Yankee boy had shifted places with the slim, fair-haired daughter of the Southerner. When he was here a month before she was confident, natural, easy ; he was awkward and embarrassed. Now she hardly knew what to say and evidently was treating him as she might some strange young gentleman ; as her

surety of manner wavered, his returned. He ate dinner this time without choking.

After the meal the Colonel looked at the cattle, and not needing them himself, he took John to a buyer who seemed satisfied with the price asked and paid over the money at once.

Then the Colonel took the young man down town and introduced him as "Mister Brown" (for he had finally gotten his name straight), and casually mentioned that he was a son of General Owen Brown, an old friend whom he had known many years, etc. John was astounded at the ease with which these white lies slipped off the Colonel's tongue. He started to make corrections, but concluded to keep still.

When the boy went back to the house in the evening, he was a bit conscious of the fact that he wore no shirt. The fact of itself was nothing, but the fact that others knew of the fact—there was the rub.

Women divine things: Mrs. Silvertown took advantage of a moment when no one else was in the room and said smilingly:

"Mister Brown, I believe I'd like you better if you were in shirt sleeves—that's the way our visitors usually dress. Come with me and I will give you one of my sons' shirts!"

There was no time to reply: he followed the woman to an upper chamber that she told him would be his room.

It was a gorgeous apartment, John thought. A mirror hung on the wall, the second he had ever seen; there were a comb, a hair brush, a clothes brush, a little rocking chair, and on the bed was a snow white spread. On the spread was a white shirt which the woman indicated with a wave of the hand. She closed the door and left him alone.

The lad had never worn a "biled shirt," but he managed to get into it. Yet when he went down-stairs things were again shifted—Margaret was composed, and John never felt so out of place in his life.

"Do you read much, Mister Brown?" asked the girl.

"Lots—that is, no, I don't read very fast."

"What books do you like best?"

"I don't like any so very much—it's hard work to read. But I read the Bible 'cause we should, you know: then Jonathan Edwards's sermons are hard because the print is small, but I like *Pilgrim's Progress* best, I guess, for there are pictures that help."

"Did you ever read *Plutarch's Lives*?"

"No, who was he, an Englishman?"

"Oh, no, he was a Greek who lived hundreds and hundreds of years ago."

"But folks did n't know much then—they were all barbarians, but the Jews, and they would have been, too, but God looked after them."

"The Greeks were not barbarians!"

"I always thought they were the same as Injuns—our preacher said so!"

"Oh, no, they were just as enlightened as we are to-day—and so were the Romans."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, Plutarch compares a Greek with a Roman—shall I read to you?"

"If you don't mind."

So the girl read—right straight off—without even tracing the line across with her finger. It was about Cæsar, and John was wonderfully interested.

"But why did they kill him?" he asked with flashing eyes.

"Why, people always kill other folks who are in their

way—they have to, I s'pose, or there could not be any government."

"I wish I'd lived then—I would have taken his part!"

"But brave men are needed now as much as then."

"Oh, I don't think so—there is nothing now but farming and buying things and selling them again."

"Oh, I'm sure that men make their own opportunities."

"It don't seem so to me."

"Well, are you always just going to farm and drive cows?"

"Why, no, but father says young people always propose doing great things, but in a few years they just settle down and farm it."

"If I were a man, I would want to think and act so I could influence other men—make them better."

"And I intend to!"

"Oh, I am glad—you seem to me just like one of those heroes we read of in books."

John had never heard much of book heroes or any other kind, and his egotism was so small that the naïve frankness of the remark was lost on him. Yet he was filled with a restless, chaotic ambition to do something and to be something. And here at last was a being who sympathized with him. He was all aglow. He leaned forward in his chair and said:

"Yes, yes, I will be somebody yet—do you know what I am going to do?"

"Why, no; tell me, please."

"No one knows it but Ruth and little Rachel!"

"Indeed!"

"Not even my father!"

"But won't he object?"

"I don't think so."

" No one must know it just yet."

" I 'll never tell."

" Well, I 've had a call."

" A what! "

" A call—a call to preach the Gospel."

" And who has called you ? "

" The Lord."

The girl started in a half-frightened manner.

" Do you mean that you are going to be a preacher ? "

" Yes, are n't you glad ? " asked John after a pause.

" Not very—that is, yes—but if it were a priest I would n't care."

" Catholic ? Never! "

" Oh, no—the Church, Church of England."

" What 's that ? "

" Episcopal."

" Why, they are people who do that which they ought not and leave undone the things which they should have done! "

" I s'pose so—I 'm one."

" Impossible! you should not jest on sacred subjects. But next month I 'm going to start back for Connecticut to study for a preacher with a minister Ruth knows—that is if father is willing—I never talked with him yet about it—he 's so busy, you know."

The Silvertons were zealous members of the Episcopal Church; they never attended any other, and looked on all preachers of other denominations as fanatical dispensers of gloom.

In that isolated life far removed from the dissipation of great cities were two spirits: the joyous and the sullen. The happy people who sang the carols out under the twinkling stars; and the oppressed, revolting, protesting folks. The negative spirit that continually

dinned "Thou shalt not," and the affirmative spirit of youth whose feet delighted in keeping time to merry music: the spirit of fasting and the spirit of feasting; of droning prayers and joyous mirth.

The Silvertons did not know that these two spirits were often found in one person; they knew the faults and the extremes of Puritanism, but they did not know its virtues. In fact it scarcely dawned on them that it could possess merit in any appreciable degree.

"Oh dear—if you are a preacher, you will never dance!"

"Never!"

"Nor play cards."

"I pray I never shall!"

"Nor listen to music."

"Only sacred music!"

"All good music is sacred music, our rector says."

"Fiddle music cannot be."

"Oh dear, oh dear, I can't argue. But mamma and I thought you were—that is, peculiar of course—but something like King Arthur! Oh dear, and you are going to be only a Puritan preacher!"

John was getting very much confused. He kind of half recalled King Arthur as a Bible character, but still he could not place him, so he did not know whether he was good or bad. And as for being a preacher, what nobler aim, what higher ambition? The only educated men he ever knew were preachers: education and preaching were one and the same. The world was divided into common folks and preachers. He aspired to be a preacher: Ruth wished him to be, and prophesied that he would be a great success; and as for little Rachel, she clapped her hands every time it was mentioned, and she was ten years old going on 'leven.

Why anyone should object to a profession that was devoted to making men better, he could not imagine.

Of course a man might mistake his "call"; possibly Jedediah Judson had, but that was not the question. The profession itself was the highest and most exalted to which mortal man could aspire. It was doing the work of God.

He tried to explain these things to Margaret, but before he had gotten through the firstly of his argument, Mrs. Silvertown came in and sat down at the harpsichord.

She seemed rather sad, John thought. She played gently as if merely testing the instrument, and then the tones gradually merged into "Rock of Ages." It was the most entrancing, heavenly music the boy had ever heard. He sat with open mouth, and the sweet strains wrapped him round as a garment. The presence of the young girl opposite him, sitting with closed eyes; the dim twilight of the room; and the music such as he had never heard, moved him to tears.

Then the mother and daughter sang, not hymns, but still songs such as the angels in Heaven might sing, John thought.

After a while Mrs. Silvertown lighted a candle, and excusing herself by saying, "you must be very tired," started him off for bed.

He was in a half trance of sublime delight. He moved up-stairs without saying a word: it seemed as though he were lifted from off the earth and was being carried to another realm. His sensitive soul had been saturated with the delight of sweet sounds and his mind was in a state of dreamy forgetfulness. He entered the little chamber, snuffed the candle out so as to be alone with his thoughts, and sat down at the open window. The moon's silver rays slanted in over all, and as he sat

there he lived over again the experiences of the evening.

That Margaret should have read for him, *for him*, and sung for him, and that her mother should have done the same! that they should have wished him good-night! Then he tried to recall each particular word that Margaret had spoken, and the expression of her face as she voiced it. He did not think of going to bed—the exquisite delight of his sensations made sleep out of the question—so he sat and thought and he seemed to be lifted and floating away, away, away! But there was a touch of pain in it all—Margaret did not wish him to be a preacher—possibly the Lord was speaking through her! why not? such beauty, and honesty, and innocence, and intelligence—surely, why should not God speak through Margaret Silverton!

He had fallen asleep as he sat there. How long he slept he did not know. He felt chilly—was someone calling? A little shower of sand fell on the roof of the veranda near the window.

He leaned his hands on the sill and looked out—no one in sight.

“Come down, John, I must tell you somethin’!”

The whispering voice seemed to come from an evergreen tree twenty feet away.

“Come down—it’s me—Jim Slivers!”

“Well, tell me, then!” spoke John in an undertone.

“I can’t from here—come down quick!”

John Brown slipped off his shoes, stepped out on the roof of the piazza, and feeling with his feet for a pillar, slid softly down to the ground.

CHAPTER VII

A HORSE-BACK RIDE THROUGH THE WOODS

“COME back here in the bushes—I must tell you, quick!”

John followed the slave boy through the dewy grass to a small clump of trees a hundred yards off.

“I ’m running away,” said Slivers. He held up a bundle tied in a bandana handkerchief.

“Why, what ’s the matter?”

“Marse, he sold me, they ’re goin’ to send me to the cotton fields.”

“Why?”

“Marse, he says I played off—hid in the weeds and don’t do my work—then I raced his horse. He ’s jest mad, that ’s all, so he ’s sold me. I ’m goin’ with you—I ’ll meet you at the Gorge to-morrow noon—you know the place? I must git there ’fore daylight an’ wait till you come.”

“Slivers, you must not.”

“But you said there was no slaves ’mong your folks!”

“True, but you are someone’s property; the Bible says, thou shalt not steal; they have already accused me of stealing a horse! No, no, I cannot help you to run away. Here is five dollars, now just stay—the cotton fields are all right. If you behave and work you will be treated well, for you will be valuable to your new owner—he can’t afford to hurt you!”

“Niggers are only good to wear out—that ’s what they have ’em on a plantation for. I ’m goin’ with you where folks is free—I ’ll meet you at the Gorge!”

Slivers slipped away into the bushes.

“Hold on there, Jim. Come back!”

John tried to follow; the boy was gone. Should he go too? Why not? but no, for them to disappear together, this would never do. The damp boughs brushed against his face as he picked his way back towards the house; his feet were wet with the heavy dew. He started to climb the pillar, and as he did so two big dogs came tearing around the corner of the house; but he was safely beyond their reach. He climbed in the window, and as he went to bed he heard Colonel Silvertown at the door below endeavoring to quiet the barking dogs.

John slept late the next morning; when he came down-stairs breakfast was awaiting him.

A colored girl waited on the table—she was a sister of Jim Slivers, sure. She was nearly white, had blue eyes and red hair. At first glance John thought it was Jim in petticoats. He was prepared for almost anything in the way of metamorphoses; he realized that even within himself great changes had taken place since he came to Silverside.

Margaret was beautiful, but hardly as beautiful as she was the evening before: something seemed to trouble her. Mrs. Silvertown's paleness was hardly so becoming: her eyes were red, as if she had been crying. In fact they were not angels at all, just beautiful women—which was a deal better.

The Colonel ate fast and was preoccupied: evidently computing in his mind how much the profits would be on eleven steers, when slaughtered, the meat packed in barrels and sold to the Government, and the hides to the tanner.

These were all excellent people, of course, and John was having a good time, but still he was anxious to get away alone, on the road for home, so he could figure out just who he was, and what he proposed to do. Everything was in a sort of whirl.

The Colonel pushed his chair back, flourished his napkin and said to the colored girl:

"Molly, send Jim in, I want to see him!"

The floor began to go up and down, the ceiling settled, and John Brown swallowed hard and clutched his chair awaiting the crash.

"So you are going to start for home this morning?" said Mrs. Silverton.

"Ye-ye-yes," said John from out between his clenched teeth. He felt the strain growing less, and knew that in a few moments he would be himself and ready for the blast.

"I can't find him, Marse Silverton!" said the girl as she appeared in the doorway, after five minutes had gone by.

A cold wave dashed over John Brown—he held his breath.

"Never mind now, anyway—oh, I say Smith—"

"Brown!" said John, nerving himself for the worst.

"I mean Brown; now, Brown, we were speaking yesterday when you first come, about a horse—a horse that strayed away—horses will stray away, you know? Well, you are a little hasty tempered and in your anger accused my sons of trying to rob you—of course, you did not mean that—they only tried to scare you. They are like all spirited young men, fond of a little joke, they are sowing their wild oats and will be the better for it. Now, Brown, you are a good fellow: tell us honest, now, they just tried to scare you, did n't they?"

John looked towards Margaret. She was gazing on him with great, big, open eyes, beseeching eyes.

"That's all—they only tried to frighten me," said John.

"What did I tell you?" said Colonel Silverton, turning to his wife.

The lady gave a sigh of relief and the pained look

seemed to go from her face. Margaret sighed too; then John sighed, and all felt better.

“ Now, Mr. Smith— ”

“ Brown,” said John.

“ Now, Mr. Brown,” continued the Colonel, “ about that missing horse, of course I know that you did not take it, but if by any chance you know where it is, why simply tell me and no harm shall come to you in any event. You are a fine, honest young fellow and no matter who says to the contrary, we believe in you. Now tell me, do you know where that horse is ? ”

“ Yes.

“ Well, where is it ? ”

“ Twelve miles north of here.”

“ Will you show me that horse, on my promise not to ask you a single further question, or bother you in any way about it ? ”

“ I will show you the horse.”

“ That ’s good—Molly! Molly, tell Jim—oh, you can’t find him, eh! well, call Tom—he is working in the garden. Tell Tom to saddle Miss Nancy and Trusty.”

“ Yes, Marse Silverton.”

The girl disappeared.

“ So we will not see you again soon,” said Mrs. Silverton, as they moved out onto the piazza.

“ No, I start for home at once.”

“ Can’t Mr. Brown take the *Plutarch*, Mamma? I know he will enjoy it! ”

“ Why certainly; then he will have to come again to bring it back,” smiled the lady.

“ Here are the horses: now, Brown, let ’s go! ”

“ You remember what you promised—not to trouble him in anyway!” said Mrs. Silverton in an undertone, laying a hand on her husband’s arm.

“ I remember, and I promise you ! ”

Each of the ladies shook hands with John : he mounted the roan mare : Margaret handed him the *Plutarch Lives*.

“ Oh, I forgot, I will need a halter, won't I, Brown ? ” asked the Colonel, one foot in the stirrup.

“ What for ? ”

“ Why to lead that horse back.”

“ Take the halter if you wish.”

“ Here you, Tom, fetch a halter quick—don't keep us waiting all day ! ”

Tom brought the halter and the two horsemen rode away.

They turned into the main road that ran down the hill, and just before they reached a clump of trees that hid the house from view, John looked back. Margaret stood on the veranda watching them. John held up the *Plutarch* and the girl waved her handkerchief as a last farewell.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RIDE EVOLVES INTO A HORSE-RACE

TWO miles out of town John reined the roan mare into the bushes, and lifted a flannel shirt from off a hickory limb—but did not go near the water. He rolled the book up in the garment, tied the bundle around with a strip of bark, and with a longer withe strung it around his shoulder. Then they rode forward.

The Colonel tried to be affable, but subjects to discuss were scarce. Their minds did not belong to the same stratum. One was practical, alert and alive to all present things; the other was dreamy, abstracted, theoretical. One was interested in Zanesville, the other in heaven and earth and the waters under the earth.

But as they floundered about for a mutual theme they struck "pay gravel."

"Your folks don't own slaves?" said Colonel Silver-ton with an upward accent.

"No, I believe they did once though, before I was born."

"Why did they quit?"

"There 's a feeling against it in Connecticut."

"But they don't think it 's wicked, do they?"

"Oh, no, not exactly wicked. Still my father says he does not care to buy and sell *men*."

"Well, that 's just where I stand."

"Don't you buy and sell slaves?"

"No, I sold all I had but half a dozen, for good and all, when I moved from Virginia."

"And you intend never to sell these you now own?"

"Of course not."

"Hem!"

"What do you mean by that noise?"

"Nothing."

"You might as well speak out!"

"Well, Jim Slivers told me last night that you had sold him!"

"Oh, he lies."

"No, he was in earnest."

"Well, I did threaten it. He is a lazy dog: I just had a man look him over and bargain for him, to scare him."

"Is that all?"

"Yes; and another thing, I seldom punish my slaves—I don't believe in it. You see it 's just plain common sense to treat your live stock well. If they are happy they do good work. You was out in my quarters, was n't you—No? Well, they are treated as well as my own folks. In fact, they are just one big happy family. Of

course I make them work—that 's for their health—and I see that they are clothed and fed and that their houses are clean and comfortable. Heaps of white folks 'bout here don't get as good a living as my slaves."

" I s'pose so, yet the white folks are free."

" You know your father owns you until you are twenty-one ? "

" But he can't sell me."

" No, but you are obliged to work for him and do what he says. Now I do not want to sell my slaves any more than your father wants to sell you. And instead of my letting them go when they are twenty-one, I keep them and take care of them until they die."

" But suppose you should die."

" Oh, my wife and boys would then treat them just as well as I do now."

" What if you should get in debt, so you would be obliged to sell them? "

" Well, that 's out of the question."

" Do they ever run away ? "

" I never had a slave run away yet—treat 'em well and they 'll stay. But are n't we getting near where that horse is ? "

" Not far now. "

" You know the law—take your own wherever you find it ? "

" Of course."

" Lord! something smells mighty strong around here."

" Rather so—follow me."

John reined his horse to the right into the thicket.

The other followed.

" There 's your horse, Colonel Silverton."

Before them lay the bloated body of the dead horse.

The Colonel turned several colors. John thought he

was going to have an apoplectic fit: he tried to speak but only gurgled. Then he turned and rode out to the road.

"Brown, you deserve a dam good thrashing, and if you was a man you 'd get it. You 're the first fellow that ever got the start of me. Now, why have you played me this trick?"

"Well, Colonel, for several reasons. Your sons tried to scare me, you say?"

"Yes."

"Well, instead of their scaring me, I scared them."

"But the horse?"

"I tied a rope across the road and let them run their horses over it. This horse got its neck broke."

"But you had no business to do that."

"Your sons had no business being here—"

John had dismounted and had passed his bridle rein to the other.

"Well, I have no time to argue, and I promised you, and promised my wife I 'd not trouble you, and I won't—good day!"

"Hold on; you pull out under those trees down below and wait a few minutes—I will show you something that will please you."

The Colonel was mystified, but he walked his horse down toward the trees, leading the roan mare behind. John walked on to the Gorge, that was a quarter of a mile ahead.

In fifteen minutes he returned, leading by the hand Jim Slivers. The Colonel had taken the horses to a little open space under the trees and was letting them graze.

It would be difficult to tell who was the most surprised, Colonel Silverton or Jim Slivers, at the sight of each other.

"He ran away, Colonel, he thought you 'd sold him,

but of course you did n't; you were only trying to frighten him—everybody seems to be trying to frighten someone nowadays. Now, Jim, go back with your master quietly—he has promised me he will never sell you."

Jim began to cry. He wept like a baby, but on the Colonel's promise not to punish him, and not to sell him, he agreed to go. In fact it was the only thing to do.

The stirrups of the saddle were taken up two holes, and Jim mounted the mare. John shook hands with both master and boy; and they rode off on a fox trot side by side.

John started for the north on his long walk. He reached the Gorge, and two miles beyond came to the Indian village.

Old Chief Blackfoot sat on a log sunning himself, smoking in stolid bliss.

"Ugh! Little Blue, how, how!"

They shook hands and Little Blue sat down on the log beside the red man. The chief passed the pipe to the boy, who made pretense of taking a few whiffs and then handed the pipe back.

They sat quiet without saying a word, which is the way an Indian visits. On the whole the plan is to be recommended, but this time it was spoiled by strange, rumbling, thundering sounds that suddenly broke on the ear.

Louder, louder they grew. All at once out of the archway of trees that covered the roadway to the south, shot a running horse.

It was the roan mare. Fifty yards behind was the thoroughbred horse, Trusty. Both horses were running at their very best. They went by like a flash, but the roan was ahead and easily kept the lead, for Jim Slivers

weighed but a hundred pounds, while Colonel Silverton weighed twice that, and was not used to the pace.

They disappeared as the road curved gently to the east around a hill.

The clatter of the pounding hoofs died away before John turned his staring eyes toward the Indian, who sat calmly smoking.

One might have supposed that thoroughbred horses racing at breakneck speed went past every few minutes, from the calm indifference of the Chief.

“ Did you see ’em ? ” excitedly asked John Brown.

“ Ugh—dam—they go heap quick ! ! ”

CHAPTER IX

THE WINNER WINS A HORSE AND HIS FREEDOM

PURITANS are not given to horse-racing. When they have a “ Punkin Show ” in New England it is a genuine affair, but a pumpkin show in the South and West only veils a “ hoss-race.”

The modern Agricultural Horse Trot has been evolved as a social necessity for the benefit of people, who, not that they love the pumpkin less, but that they love the horse-race more, require it.

John Brown dearly loved animals and the proud strength and beauty of a horse was to him a delight.

That the roan mare was ahead and likely to hold her lead gave him the keenest satisfaction. He saw that Slivers rose in his stirrups and leaned over Miss Nancy’s neck. He also noticed that Slivers carried a switch and did not use it ; while the Colonel’s riding whip was not for show, for at every stride it was cracking merrily around the stifle of the straining Trusty.

Evidently Slivers was saving the mare.

John turned to the Indian, and forgetting the instructions of his youth, would have laid a bet with the Chief on the roan, but the Indian had no interest in the race, and worse, no money. The lad started in the direction of the fleeing horsemen at a rapid pace. Why did he go?

He did n't know. Perhaps he wished to see which won; perhaps he thought he might be of use to one or the other of the contestants, or possibly he felt that he himself was directly concerned in the issue, but probably his emotions were a mixture of all these elements.

Before he had gone a half mile he discovered that his pace was too fast. He was coming to his senses a bit: he could not hope to overtake those race horses unless they stopped, and if they turned back he could head them off in one place as well as another. And he also knew this fact, that a man on foot, who is used to walking, can go a hundred miles as quickly as a man on horseback. This being so, if they all kept on, they would arrive at Hudson about the same time.

The tracks in the road showed plainly that the horses had still run fast: in a mile they had eased down to a gallop. The trapper's eye that had followed trails knew the speed at which they had passed, but he could not tell whether it was fifty yards, one hundred yards or ten feet that separated the riders.

Two miles more and one set of tracks turned to the left on a side road that ran over the hill.

The roan mare had kept straight ahead; Trusty had given up the race and turned for home by the East Road.

John sat down and could have cried. He hoped to see Colonel Silverton and explain that he had had nothing to do with Slivers's running away. He was bewildered.

As he sat there on a boulder that marked the fork of

the road, his eye glanced on a fluttering bit of paper that was held by a split stick driven into the ground. John wondered that he had not seen it before. He stepped over and took the paper. It was a leaf torn from a pocket note book. He unfolded the paper and scrawled across it were these words:

JOHN SMITH
of Hudson:

You have fooled me by your Yankee tricks, but I will get even with you yet. You enticed my boy Jim to run away—then you got me to go with you on pretence of finding my horse. You rode my valuable race mare and gave her over to the nigger. I will catch you yet. When my sons said you was a horse thief, they told the truth. Dam all Yanks.

M. SILVERTON.

This was scratched off so hastily that it took John several minutes to make it out, and even then he did not get the sense of it.

He jammed the paper into his pocket and started ahead. Only one idea possessed him now: that was to overtake the slave boy and prevail upon him to take the horse back at once. And, if necessary, he would return the horse and boy himself. It was well toward the middle of the afternoon when John stopped at a settler's cabin that stood back in a clearing. They had seen a boy on a roan horse go by, but it was fully two hours before. Evidently Slivers was going to put as many miles between himself and Zanesville as possible.

In his excitement John had forgotten about dinner, and this with the excitement of the day before and the sleepless night, now told on him to such an extent that he was feeling faint. He decided to remain at the settler's until the next morning.

Before the morrow's sun appeared he was again on his way. The tracks of the mare could still be made out, but no one had seen the horse and rider: evidently they were traveling by night.

A passing shower came sweeping over the woods, but John trudged on regardless of wet; and the rain had made it impossible to know whether the roan mare was still moving northward or not.

But as he walked he saw something in the roadway that attracted his attention. He turned back to examine it closer: it was a yellow marble lying on a large, flat, green basswood leaf. The boy picked up the marble—it was the identical one he had given to Slivers on his first visit to Zanesville.

Half a mile farther on he saw a small stone on a broad green leaf just as the marble had been placed. And so at intervals of about a mile were these signs that Slivers had left.

But why did he not wait for his friend and offer him a ride?

The reason to John was plain: Slivers was afraid that if John Brown should catch up with him he would send him back, and so he kept steadily in advance, and at every mile he placed in the middle of the road a round stone on a green leaf.

At nightfall on the third day John found the last broad basswood leaf held to the earth by a pebble.

One mile more and the outskirts of the village were reached, and there in the twilight by the roadside sat Jim Slivers, holding the bridle rein of the roan mare. He had arrived just a half hour ahead of his friend.

"You won't send me back—they'll kill me now—you won't send me back, will you?"

"Not to-night, anyway."

The mare was thin and gaunt and the boy's appearance showed that he was near starvation.

John waited until dark and then led the horse straight to his father's stable, where the tired racer was given feed and a comfortable stall with a good straw bed. In this straw the worn out slave boy was also deposited.

Then John went to Ruth's. Little Rachel was abed, and John only told the woman that a tired and hungry traveler was in the stable, and straightway she packed in a basket more food than two men could eat. John took it to the boy, using due precaution to give him only what he needed.

The next move was to find Squire Brown and take him to Ruth's. Arriving there John drew up three chairs, and sitting with their elbows—John, the Squire and Ruth—on the table, the young man started to give the facts just as they had occurred.

The Justice of the Peace stopped the story in the first chapter, to ask if John had sold the cattle, and being answered in the affirmative and the money passed over, he settled himself into his judicial frame of mind and listened to the recital.

That he was pleased with his son's spirit was very evident, and that he was angry that anyone had dared accuse a Brown of theft, was very sure. To this extent he lost the poise that a true Justice should possess. The boy paused, and the story being done, Ruth gave him for his pains a world of sighs, and swore 't was strange, 't was wondrous strange. The Judge cleared his throat preparatory to giving a decision, when a rap was heard at the door, and without waiting for an answer, in walked the Rev. Jedediah Judson.

The preacher's house was just across the way and he had seen John come and go: he had also noted the

arrival of Squire Brown. Like all small-minded men he had curiosity about the affairs of his neighbors. He concluded he would make the widow a long deferred pastoral call.

"Ah, I just dropped in—I thought someone might be sick, so if I could be of any help—"

"Yes, we 're glad you 've come," said Squire Brown.

The Squire was not quite sure about what to do—it was a case such as he had never before had—his own son was involved. It suddenly occurred to him to shift the matter with legal to spiritual grounds; in other words, to ask the advice of the preacher.

"Yes, we 're glad you 've come—we want your advice!"

Now advice was the one thing that the pastor delighted in giving—the more advice he gave the more he had left—it was like the widow's cruse of oil.

He drew up a chair and listened intently while Squire Brown explained that a slave boy had run away and taken his master's horse and that both horse and slave were now in his barn.

"Let us take it to the Lord in prayer!" said the preacher. So all knelt while the minister asked that they be guided aright.

Then they got up from their knees and debated the question.

"We must n't keep the slave or keep the horse, they are the same as stray cattle—we must send 'em back. But that man Silversides must apologize for accusing my son of robbery!" grimly said the Justice.

"Yes, let him come, pay costs, apologize and get his property, it's the only thing to do," said the preacher.

"John, go fetch the negro. Let 's have a look at him!!"

“ Yes, bring him here, I will give him a word or two of truth. It may place his feet on the solid rock of salvation.”

John went out and soon returned with the boy.

“ Why, Judas! he ’s white,” exclaimed Rev. Judson, forgetting all dignity.

“ Poor fellow,” said Ruth.

It was pitiable. The boy’s teeth were chattering with fright. He half expected to be executed on the spot; the absence of food, and the sleeping out of doors, had affected his nerves to such an extent that he was positively ill.

“ Surely he is more white than black! ”

“ He ’s as white as we are,” said the preacher.

“ I swan, he looks like you,” laughed the Squire. And seeing there was danger of giving offense, he made matters worse by backing it up:

“ He has red hair, blue eyes, and freckles, so he has! ”

“ Well, what of it! his hair is kinky! ”

“ We ’ll cut it close to his head and then he ’ll be a white man! ”

“ But we can’t keep him here—his master will be after him, dead sure, in less than twenty-four hours! ”

“ Hide him, then! ”

“ I have it, send him to my wife’s father. He can work for ’em and it ’s an out-of-the-way spot anyway. This fellow’s horse will come in handy for Hoskins! ”

“ But we must get him away from here to-night—the whole village will know of his arrival if we wait until to-morrow! ”

“ It ’s only eight miles—I ’ll take him over to Hoskins’s to-night, myself,” said the preacher.

Slivers felt relieved to know that he was not going to be sent back to slavery. He tried to thank his new-

found friends, and after Squire Brown had raised his spirits with a good dose of whiskey, he did.

“ I ’d never consent to this plan under the sun,” said the Justice of the Peace, “ but for three reasons. First, he ’s nearly white, so is n’t legally a slave at all. Second, the Western Reserve belongs to Connecticut and it is against the law to import slaves. Thirdly, relates to the horse, and as for this, the defendant, not being legally a slave, is entitled to wages for past services rendered and takes the horse on account.”

This was rustic judicature, and very bad law. The Court of Appeals would surely have reversed every count. But the case was not carried to a higher court, all for good and sufficient reasons which are hereinafter given.

Slivers’s hair was cut tight to his head, and at midnight, when it was quite certain that all Hudson was abed and asleep, the Reverend Jedediah Judson mounted his dumb beast, and followed by Jim Slivers on the roan mare, moved out of town on an easy jog.

No irate slave hunters from Zanesville arrived, as expected, in Hudson the next day; or the next; but at three o’clock in the morning of the fourth day six people from Zanesville stood in front of Squire Brown’s residence. The much surprised Squire was awakened. He admitted these six people to his house; and then hurried over to Ruth Crosby’s for his son John.

But John was not there.

CHAPTER X

MORE RUNAWAYS ARRIVE

MANY men have hobbies, and expend their time in accumulating this, that or the other. Whatever they fix their hearts upon, they want it to be finer, better, more distinctive than that of any other collector with a similar bias.

One man wants only Jersey cattle, another Holsteins, another Durhams and the fourth man will have none of these; Herefords is the only cow for him: and they must all have the white face, the line down the back and a certain curve of horn.

Other men take to horses and breed only one class. The man who has a penchant for trotters has no use for a Percheron. And whether the human heart fixes itself on rare books, spoons, orchids, cattle, horses, or dogs, it wants the most peculiar and the most noteworthy.

In slavery times, when negroes were chattels, owners often had a taste for certain shades of complexion. And in the South, even unto this day, can be heard at country post-offices arguments as to the excellence of servants of a certain tint, and warnings as to others.

Colonel Silvertown of Zanesville, as we have already seen, had red hair, blue eyes and freckles. He was a man of force and intelligence. In another environment he might have made a citizen of rare excellence, for he had in his nature the germ of many virtues.

Some years before our story begins, a mulatto woman whom he owned had had a child. The baby was nearly white: it had freckles, blue eyes, and its kinky hair was a rusty red. The child grew and was very active and intelligent.

At first Colonel Silverton was annoyed to think that this slave child looked so much like himself, for the neighbors took it as a great joke. But finally the Colonel grew to have a sort of affection for the youngster and aside from the embarrassment at the idea of its resemblance to himself, he took a pride in it. In less than two years the slave mother had another child that looked almost exactly like the first. In fact this woman and another octoroon bore eleven children, all looking remarkably alike and all resembling in a marked degree their owner. These slaves were all known as "Slivers" for miles around: the name being a corruption of Silverton: Sliverton, Slivers.

They were all what were known in slave times as "red-head niggers." They were so nearly white that if they had had straight hair and had lived in the North they would easily have passed as whites.

The law never defined just how small a degree of negro blood makes a negro. Even one sixty-fourth part was enough to make the person a slave. He might be absolutely white, and if there was proof, or even legendary proof, that there was negro blood in his veins, he could be bought and sold. And even now a person with one sixty-fourth African blood cannot legally ride in a first-class passenger car in the State of Kentucky. And if a white man with curly hair and a snub nose should associate with negroes in the South he would gain the name "nigger," and could not possibly get away from it without moving far away, and even then it might follow him. The only proof of a man's being a negro often rests on the one fact that he lives with negroes.

Colonel Silverton took great pride in his blue-eyed slaves. He treated them well, and did not part with any of them unless they were so unruly that there was danger

of their corrupting the others, and then it came to him as a personal sorrow.

Some folks thought that the Colonel's tender heartedness on the slave question was only sophistry: for he sold a slave or two every year and they were not real up and down vicious niggers—merely lazy niggers—and all niggers are lazy.

“He sells them 'cause he's hard up, and as an excuse he swears they 're bad!” whispered the white trash among themselves.

But what of it? why, even parents often send their children to reform schools. They even disinherit them and turn them out of doors. Yankees are given to saying to erring daughters—“Never darken that door again.”

Colonel Silverton was sure he would not do anything so heartless as that. If his slaves reached a point where he could not manage them, he would simply transfer them to someone who could look after them properly. This was true Christianity, compared with kicking them out to shift for themselves. And let us admit right here that Colonel Silverton was not a totally depraved man. He delighted in kind deeds and generous acts. In the clay that was used to make him there was mixed much positive good.

Indeed, the plotting villain only exists in imagination: outside of book covers and away from the theatre the like of him is never seen on land or sea.

Colonel Silverton even had rudiments of a conscience, and at the Last Day he will perhaps stand not far from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Solomon. His practices were not unlike theirs when in his palmyest days of prosperity—back in Ole Virginny—he blossomed out in barbaric splendor. His horses, his cattle and his slaves

were the finest and best that money could buy, and all were cared for with every attention that a lavish purse could devise.

But things got in a bad way—his speculations in tobacco showed a balance on the wrong side: when he played cards he got no trumps: but when he straightened up matters by giving long-time notes and moving to Zanesville, he hoped for better things.

The war of 1812 made business good and his contracts for supplying the army with beef brought him in good returns. But suddenly peace was declared and this again upset his prospects. Still the Colonel was a man of courage and resource: he never said die.

The old notes were extended and in the little games at cards at the Royal Hotel he won some money. He played heavier—with high hopes of taking up those threatening, hounding notes: in fact he had a "system" at cards that he was sure would win if he could hold out. But he was unable to hold and the cards running against him, he sold Jim Slivers—in fact he had to. Besides that, Jim was a lazy dog, anyway.

That night Jim ran away. The Colonel discovered this fact in a peculiar way, as we have seen. He thought, of course, the darkey would return, without question, but when he saw the roan mare suddenly swerve and shoot back the other way, he knew there was a horse-race on hand.

Having chased the boy until he knew the hope of overtaking him was futile, he headed back for Zanesville by the shortest cut, intending to swear out a warrant for the arrest of young Brown and let the Sheriff go with a posse and capture the slave and horse.

But when he arrived home he did not have to call the Sheriff: the Sheriff called on him. The holders of the

dreaded notes having been informed that the Colonel had gambled away one of his niggers, and fearing the others would go the same way, had attached the six "Sliverses," and when the Colonel returned from his horse-back ride, the Sheriff was sitting on the veranda, documents in hand, awaiting his return. For the present, the "property" was allowed to remain where it was, awaiting a possible adjustment of the debts.

Of course, the slaves were much agitated. They thought this sudden legal move meant immediate transportation to the rice fields. All that night they sat up and prayed, calling on the Lord for deliverance.

Slivers had run away: they guessed where he had gone, for he had told great tales about how everyone in Hudson was free. John's few chance words had taken root in the tropic soil of his imagination, and when at nightfall he told his companions about the Western Reserve, he pictured it as a paradise.

There were seven of these Sliverses: Tom, Jane, Molly, Squint, Sandy and Jerry: Jim had already gone.

Tom was twenty-two and the others ran down to little Jerry who was only eight. They decided to run away, and that night after their prayer meeting they started: walking only at night and sleeping in the woods in the daytime.

The Colonel was so chagrined by the unlucky turn things had taken that he grew reckless and simply went off and got drunk.

This indifferent spirit had given the runaways an opportunity to get a good start.

They had heard of the great Squire Brown and they felt that if they could only reach him they would be safe. They enquired their way to his house, and having found it, the worthy Squire was awakened from sleep.

He was astounded: from confused references to his son, he feared John was the cause of this exodus. He huddled the six shivering runaways into his little sitting room, and wearing only trousers and shirt he ran in his stocking feet over to Ruth's. After considerable banging the widow was aroused: John was not there; she thought he had gone over to Hoskins's to see that colored boy.

"I swan to Guinny—Confound it! What 's to be done—they will be proving me a stealer of black men next."

He hastened over to consult the preacher.

CHAPTER XI

THE SLAVES ARE RE-TAKEN, WITH ONE WHITE MAN OVER

A PREACHER may be very ordinary in point of sense, but he still has much the advantage of an average farmer or mechanic. His appearances in public give him a self-confidence that carries weight, even with men of discernment, and, no doubt, meeting with many people supplies a degree of surface glitter even to dull wits. Squire Brown deferred to no one in town but the preacher.

"It beats the Dutch," said the Rev. Jedediah. "Why in time are all the niggers in the land coming to Hudson?"

"There are only six in the party, and one the other day is seven," apologized the Squire.

"Are seven, you mean," said the preacher—"Well, wait a minute till I get on some clothes and we will go over; I can give 'em some good advice, anyway."

Jedediah looked the runaways over, holding a dim lighted candle in his hand. He counted them, placing his hand on the head of each—there were just six and none to carry. "Let us pray," said Jedediah, and he dropped on his knees and proceeded to ask for divine guidance in this hour of difficulty.

The slaves were filled with hope when they found they were among Christian people, and would have shouted and sung for joy had they not been restrained.

The oldest man in the party told their story as we have related it, but with many circumlocutions and much needless detail. None of the six had ever talked with John Brown, but all had seen him and heard through Jim Slivers of the wonders of the Western Reserve, which they seemed to think had been reserved by God for oppressed humanity.

The Squire's wife was preparing breakfast for the half famished refugees; and Jedediah had gone home to take the difficulty to the Lord in prayer in the secret of his closet, promising to return soon.

When he returned it was broad day-light.

As he entered the room and cast his eye around he exclaimed: "Holy Moses — why, they are white folk."

And so they were, only not quite. Little Jerry had lain down on the floor and gone to sleep in sweet content; Molly and Jane, two fine, strong young women, had taken hold in true womanly style and were helping Mrs. Brown do the housework.

Squire Brown had no fixed idea of what was the best plan of action, neither had the preacher. These people could stay and work, of course—they were welcome to a home in the village, and Jedediah had even thrown out a promise that he would accept them in full membership

in the church, on profession of faith, even without the letters which they had neglected to secure.

But no definite scheme of procedure was laid out; in fact, fate had decided for them.

It was still early in the morning, when the firing of guns was heard close at hand. The Squire and the preacher rushed out of the house and found it surrounded by armed men. They had evidently come in two wagon loads, with half a dozen on horseback, approaching the village from several different directions. A few had guns, the others were armed with pitchforks, scythes tied to poles, or clubs. They were as villainous a lot of ruffians as were ever turned loose on a community. Beneath the wagon were chained several blood-hounds.

It was a sheriff's posse from Zanesville, made up of volunteers, and the promise of unlimited whiskey and lots of fun had secured the very scum of the town.

The Sheriff was a big, bewhiskered individual, with probably some sense of decency; but his overweening thirst to do his "duty" made him a regular despot.

He exhibited his papers authorizing him to secure "one roan mare, and the bodies, dead or alive, of seven negroes, to wit:" etc. His form darkened the door-way when he stood and read aloud in a high official court-crier voice the long document. Then he produced another warrant for the arrest of one John Brown, who was accused of stealing horses and "bondsmen."

In the name of the law the Sheriff took possession of the six negroes. One of his henchmen produced a chain about twenty feet long and eight pairs of handcuffs. The six slaves were handcuffed to this chain in pairs, being placed about three feet apart so that they could walk in procession if need be.

Squire Brown protested, Mrs. Brown begged, the chil-

dren cried: but all were roughly pushed aside. The ruffians outside kept up a din of shooting and yelling; the blood hounds bayed and the village people, thoroughly intimidated, wisely kept to their houses.

When the six slaves were safely chained the Sheriff rattled the two pairs of handcuffs that were left over:

“ Here we go now, my Christian fren’s—jest two pair left, one fer a white man and t’ other fer a nigger—bring ’em out and we bid you good-day. We ’d like to stay, thankee—but no use teasin’ us, we can’t do it—now fetch out the accused! ”

“ The two persons you want are not here! ” protested Squire Brown.

“ Don’t lie, ole man, you know where the liars go—bring out the two beggars er we ’ll turn the house wrong side out! ”

“ You may search the house if you choose, but you will not find them! ”

“ Oho, so we may search the house—oh, thankee very much—search the house, boys! ”

Three men began to search. They jerked the clothes off from beds, turned trunks upside down, dived into chests, looked into the clock, rummaged in boxes and went through the house from cellar to garret.

Then they searched the barn; threatened, swore, cursed, and declared they would search every house in the place and stay for a month, but that they would capture their men. And carrying out their threat they proceeded to Ruth’s, leaving a guard who were instructed not to allow Squire Brown to leave his house. The Sheriff kept Jedediah close to him—he evidently thought these men were the instigators of the trouble.

Finding nothing at Ruth’s, they started across the road for the parsonage. Jedediah pleaded with them to spare

his home, and hinted that if the Sheriff would go in alone with him, they might have a quiet understanding that would be to the advantage of all parties.

The Sheriff was anxious to make a complete success of the raid: he was sent to bring back seven slaves, one horse and a horse-thief: one slave, one horse and the horse-thief were yet to be found. He wanted to make a clean job of it, so he caught at once at the hint of a compromise—anything to succeed.

The Sheriff ordered his men to stay behind, and he and the preacher entered the parsonage and closed the door.

“ So you know where they be, do you ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Man, nigger and horse ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Wall, show 'em up.”

“ How much will you give me ? ”

The Sheriff's little black eyes twinkled: he was debating whether he had better throttle this fellow at once and force the secret out of him, or should he buy it! Ah, he need not do either—he would be a lawyer and use diplomacy.

“ I want the property and I want the man, but you oughter not to make us pay—not very much anyway! ”

“ Give me a hundred dollars and I 'll show you where they are! ”

“ Is it far ? ”

“ Only eight miles.”

“ Wall, I want no trouble—and I oughter hurry back too—make it fifty and it 's a go! ”

“ All right, pay me the money and I 'll show you your men and horse.”

“ Oh, I can't do that—it 's a good paymaster who pays when he gets the goods.”

“ So you ’ll agree to pay me fifty dollars as soon as I show ’em to you ? ”

“ Yes, sirree—shake ! ”

So they shook hands. Jedediah went to the stable, followed by the Sheriff, and saddled his horse, and with the Sheriff and four of his men they started for the farm of Joshua Hoskins.

When within a mile of the house, the preacher pointed it out and refused to go further. The Sheriff riding behind him patted the stock of the rifle he carried and told him he better go on. Three of the riders circled down the valley so as to come in from the other side: the Sheriff, the preacher and the other man rode slowly straight ahead. They arrived at the house at the same time.

Mr. Hoskins and his wife were much surprised to receive this unexpected visit from their son-in-law.

“ These gentlemen want to see John—John Brown,—on a little matter of business ! ”

“ Why, he ’s not here ! ” answered Mr. Hoskins.

“ Then that slave boy, Splinters. Send Splinters out at once ! ”

“ Slivers, you mean. Why, he ’s not here, either ! ”

“ And the roan horse ? ”

“ The horse is gone, too—the boys rode away, both on the one horse, yesterday— ”

“ Why, they can’t be far. What did they take with them ? ”

“ John carried a book with him, nothing else.”

“ Search the house ! ” roared the Sheriff.

The three henchmen sprang from their saddles and handing their bridle reins to the Sheriff, proceeded to rummage through the Hoskins residence.

It did not take them long to convince themselves that

no one was in hiding in the house. They proceeded to the stable and saw where the roan mare had stood the day before.

"A wild goose chase! You've lied to us, rascal!"

Jedediah tried to explain. He was as much disappointed as the other, yet could not convince the Sheriff of the fact.

They rode straight back to town on a quick pace, Jedediah obeying orders and keeping in the front.

Arriving in Hudson, the Sheriff was evidently relieved to find that the townspeople had not swooped down and liberated his prisoners. Yet he hated the idea of going back one slave short. Young niggers were worth at least five hundred dollars apiece, and when he was sent to do a job, he wanted to do it.

"Come in here, you red head," he said to Jedediah when they had reached Squire Brown's.

The refugees had settled down and were meekly accepting their fate, just as we always do when worst comes to worst. They were singing the songs of Zion, and getting satisfaction from a religion that has a blessing for the persecuted and a promise of reward for the meek.

Jedediah took the opportunity to whisper a few words of spiritual consolation to the bondsmen as they huddled together in a corner of the little room.

The Sheriff and two of his men were conversing in an undertone. One of these men was a quiet individual who seemed in appearance somewhat of a gentleman. He carried a gun, but kept apart from the others and drank no whiskey from the keg that was in the wagon. This keg had been replenished during the day at the grocery, and the visitors had not thought to pay. In fact they had helped themselves to eatables and drinkables and were now noisy and reckless to a high degree.

"By God, they do look alike," blurted the Sheriff.

"They are all cut from one piece, I tell you."

"All have red hair!"

"And freckles!"

"And blue eyes!"

"And bow-legs!"

"Captain Harker, do you identify these seven negroes as the ones you purchased from Colonel Silverton?" asked the Sheriff in a voice that was designed for all to hear.

"I do," said the quiet man firmly.

"Boys, we 've got the niggers!"

This last remark was shouted out of the door at the men in the yard.

Several of them came running forward until the room was crowded full. One fellow knocked off Jedediah's hat, another grabbed into his collar and yanked him towards the chain.

In a twinkling he was handcuffed fast. His face was pallid with fear and in his dishevelled condition he did not look unlike the group with which he was chained. The ruffians sent up shout after shout of triumph, as they hustled the captives out into the road where they were ordered to climb into the wagon. Being fastened too closely, they were unable to do this without considerable difficulty.

"Load 'em in, boys."

A dozen of the posse rushed forward, and picking up bodily the seven prisoners, tumbled them into the wagon.

It was a deep box partially filled with straw. Several men with pitchforks climbed in and sat on boards that were placed across the wagon bed. The horses were already hitched on—the order was given to start, and

away they started with a cracking of whips, a barking of dogs and a shout of defiance.

Several of the horsemen stayed back and fired shots into the air as a warning that the townspeople must not follow; then away they went with a rush towards the south and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

The runaway slaves were gone, the pastor of the church was gone. But John Brown, Slivers and the roan mare, where were they?

CHAPTER XII

JOHN AND JIM MAKE A HASTY DEPARTURE

THE ability to conceive and the will to act were budding in the breast of John Brown. The self-reliance of manhood was pushing him out and away from his fellows and even from his parents. In his own mind he had worked out the truth that it was "a condition and not a theory" that confronted him. He had viewed the question from the side of Colonel Silverton, and how that gentleman (who was not o'er gentle) could help throwing the blame for the loss of a slave and a horse on him, he could not imagine. The property was valuable—the officers of the law would follow it up—and if they came to Hudson, as they surely would, they would likely get a clue in some way to the whereabouts of Slivers. And from the threat made by Colonel Silverton, he—John Brown—would be apprehended.

His sympathies for Slivers were aroused and he began to look upon the boy as a victim of persecution: he cast about in his mind for a way to get his friend to a place of safety.

Yet doubt and perplexity wrung his soul, for the sweet

face of Margaret was ever before him. If he could only advise with her—if he could only tell her his plans! And then the remembrance that she had not looked with favor on his becoming a preacher shook his fortitude like an ague chill. If she only knew what a great and good preacher he proposed to be, he was sure that she would give him her blessing and say, “Go, and may the Lord be with you!”

Instead of reading the Bible he was now reading *Plutarch*. He went into the house resolved to open the book at random, and the paragraph his eye chanced to light on, he would take for a message. This was the passage:

“He was directed by the gods; and having received the impression what was best to do he straightway did it, keeping his plans hidden in his own heart; and whatsoever he attempted, he succeeded in doing. . . .”

John closed the book and exclaimed to Ruth:

“Please bring me a sheet of paper. I want to write a letter!”

“Why, surely, you are getting to be almost a man when you can write letters!”

The paper was brought and John labored at the letter, Rachel looking on in admiration. But she could not read writing; besides that, John could not write well, so Rachel did not know to whom the letter was or what it was about.

The letter finished, folded, directed, and sealed, John sprang up with a sudden determination and said:

“I ’m going away—I ’m going away”—And the words of Plutarch kept singing in his ears—“keeping his plans hidden in his own heart.” He lowered his tone and said casually, “Yes, I ’m going away—good-bye!”

He had already passed out of the door.

“And not even tell where,” smiled Ruth.

"And without kissing me good-bye," said little Rachel, who now came running forward from where she was washing the dishes, her hands all soap-suds. She held up her rosy face to be kissed, and the tall boy leaned over the little girl and tenderly kissed her cheek and patted the brown curls.

"No, and not even tell where—my plans are hidden in my own breast!"

Ruth thought she saw tears in his eyes as he turned and went down the pathway.

"John's getting funny lately—don't you think so, Mamma?" said little Rachel.

"Oh, he's always odd; you know people can't be alike!"

"I think he is getting stuck up since he went to Zanesville. He did n't fetch us anything the last time!"

"Oh, he can't think of us all the time."

"He ought to—was n't it we that brought him up?"

"Well, partially."

"Where's he going now, do you think?"

"Oh, only after the cows somewhere; his father sent him, I suppose."

And while the harmless little talk between mother and daughter was in progress, John had stopped for an instant at his father's house and had then crossed the bridge and was walking fast towards the clearing in the woods that marked the farm of Joshua Hoskins.

The eight miles were turned off in a fraction less than two hours. In a stump patch near the log house John saw the roan mare hitched alongside of an ox. The team was hitched to a plow: Hoskins was riding the horse (a new experience for him) and Slivers was holding the handles.

John looked at the combination and grimly wondered

after all whether the condition of a free man was any better than that of a bondsman. The mud-chinked house, devoid of the slightest attempt toward beauty, was surely not so good as the smartly white-washed "quarters" at Silverside; the work was hard, and the society of the sober, serious, life-burdened Hoskins was not enlivening. Slivers had had three days of "freedom" and was ready to accept any change—even to going back to slavery. A cotton field could not be worse than a stump field, and at least there was in slavery the companionship of his fellows.

So when John told Mr. Hoskins, with a touch of imperiousness, that Slivers must go with him for a day or so, Slivers was delighted and Hoskins depressed.

"I thought I was to have the boy and horse for taking care on 'em," slowly said the thrifty Hoskins.

"And so you are—when I bring them back," said John.

"I s'pose your father has sent you off for cattle, and so you'll have to have the horse, too?" said Hoskins as he dismounted.

"Yes, we'll have to take the horse and go quick," said John, inwardly congratulating himself that he had escaped telling a positive lie.

Slivers was keen for liberty, which he now realized was quite a different thing from freedom. He unfastened the traces, and slipped the old chain harness off the mare in a twinkling. *

At a bound John sprang into the saddle; Slivers, without being told, swung up behind as the mare moved away.

"When will we see you again?" called the puzzled Hoskins.

"When we get back," shouted John.

The severe work had told on Miss Nancy, yet at a dig from John's heels she struck into a gallop and boys and horse disappeared in the woods, but not in the direction from whence they came.

That same night the slave hunters arrived in Hudson.

CHAPTER XIII

VACANT PLACES, YET THE OLD WORLD GOES ON

IT was dusk when the Sheriff's party made their noisy exit from the town of Hudson. No one in the place had witnessed the abduction of the preacher, save Squire Brown; and the whole matter had happened so quickly that he hardly realized it. He had tried to protest, but his voice was drowned by the howling of the drunken mob.

In an hour after the coast was clear the frightened citizens began to come out of their houses. No one knew just what had happened — very few, indeed, knew that the refugees were in Squire Brown's house; and when it became known that he had harbored the run-aways and thus brought the mob of slave hunters down on the place, they were naturally incensed.

Brown was the richest man in town, and one woman now hinted that his money came by very dark methods, with a sneer and a slide and a peculiar twist on the word "dark."

Squire Brown did not tell of the capture of the preacher: he felt he would be blamed in the matter — why had he allowed it? the whole proceeding occurred in his own house, under his very nose. He prayed hard that it would come out all right, and he fully believed that in the morning when the posse were sober, they

would see their mistake and bring "the Elder" back; further than this, the preacher had a tongue in his head and could speak for himself. And as for the slaves, it was the Sheriff's duty to take them.

So Squire Brown absolved himself from blame, and assuring his family, who had been hiding in the barn, that all danger was past, he ordered his wife to prepare supper. After the meal, and before the younger children were put to bed, he proceeded to hold family prayers, as was his custom.

On opening the Bible, the leaves parted at a place where there was a letter. The family Bible was always a sort of receptacle for documents and papers; he had seen this letter the night before, but had paid no attention to it. He now discovered that the seal was not broken, and on inspection saw that the missive was directed to himself.

He broke the seal and read the letter. With bad spelling corrected, it ran as follows:

HUDSON, OHIO, August 30, 1815.

MY DEAR FATHER:

When you read this I will be many miles away. I do not tell you where, for that would put you to the trouble of following me. I have a work to do. My plans are hidden in my own breast. I know you have always wanted me to do something worthy, and as you are very busy, I did not care to waste your time by talking about it. I have received the impression what is best to do and I am going to do it.

Yours truly,

JOHN BROWN.

P. S.—I'm not afraid of them slave owners, but still I know they will blame me and be here soon looking for Slivers and the horse. Slivers and the horse are going with me.

J. B.

The Deacon hastily stuffed the letter into his pocket and then proceeded to do his chapter. He read in a hurried, absent-minded sort of way. The prayer that followed was a stereotyped affair that proved to the entire dozen of Browns, big and little, that the father of his family was thinking of the contents of that letter.

Like many another good man, Deacon Brown never took his family into his confidence; but he felt now that an explanation was due, so he told the children that he had sent their brother John away on a trip, and that the letter was only about some business. Then he went out into the night air and mopped his forehead in perplexity and tried to recall what particular sin he had been guilty of, that the hand of the Lord should be laid so heavily upon him.

He loved the boy, John, more than all his flock, yes, more than his wife: the lad resembled his dead mother—the woman whom he had loved in his youth—and now that the boy had gone, he knew for the first time how great his affection for the lad was. He was to him what Joseph was to Jacob. The rest that were left were good, and they were strong, but they lacked the spirit and individuality. And yet—yes, he said it with hot tears of regret—he had never once taken the boy to his heart and told him of his love. Never had he shown him sympathy except in indirect ways.

No, he did not blame the lad for going, but if he had only asked his advice or asked for money or asked for his blessing. But he asked for nothing: he went, that 's all: he was sufficient unto himself. The Deacon was grieved, but as he thought again how independent the lad was in planning his own course and carrying it out, there came instead of tears, a sad smile of satisfaction to think that his favorite son was no weakling, after all.

The Deacon sent one of the children over to the parsonage to tell Mrs. Judson that her husband would not return until the next day.

The pastor's wife sent back word that she "did not care if he did not come at all."

The lady spake wiser than she knew, for the preacher did not return the next day, or the next, or the next, and it became noised about that he had run away. It was known that he did not live on good terms with his wife; besides he was in debt to many people for various small sums.

If there had been a newspaper in the town the affair would have been written up, and the headlines would have announced, "Another good man gone wrong."

The Bible has a special injunction concerning our duty towards the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, and country people are not slow in following it. A preacher's widow is fit subject for a farmer's commiseration the wide world over.

A bee was held, and Liza Ann Judson's little harvest was gathered. What her garden did not produce, their farms did—so her cellar was filled, and many loads of wood were brought, for the local weather prophet predicted a hard winter.

It is very, very rare that any one man in a community is necessary to its life. A preacher especially, who is always a consumer and not necessarily a producer, may often be easily spared. Deacon Brown filled in on Sundays with Jonathan Edwards; and Liza Ann being freed from the trammel of a quibbling, selfish, and small-minded man was fairly contented. Unknown to herself she was glad he was gone, but the people of the town thought she was sorely afflicted and this brought her their sympathy, a thing which they tendered to her

begrudgingly when her husband was with her, and when, therefore, she needed it most. Perhaps she thought herself sorely afflicted, and yet being able to bear the burden, she got a satisfaction from it, for martyrdom is never all martyrdom; so she was happy, and thinking herself miserable, she turned to "good works" for peace; and therein was she refreshed, and with Ruth's guidance she lightened the labors of many who bore burdens in very fact.

These Sisterhoods of Mercy, whose membership is made up of stricken womanhood, what would poor humanity do without them!

But the boys of the village, and the men of the village, and the women of the village, missed John Brown. For he could run and wrestle, and drive cattle and do that which other boys of his age could not do; he had intellect and was alive and alert, so the boys liked him, and the parents knew that his influence over the other boys was good.

In Ruth's little household there was a great big vacant space, and in Deacon Brown's heart was another.

They felt sure John could manage for himself, but the uncertainty of it all, the uncertainty!

CHAPTER XIV

EXPLOITING THE PUBLIC AND PROSPERITY

WHERE we goin', Mister Himbook?"
"Call me John, please! Where did you get that other foolish name?"

"Why, that 's what Marse, he called you!"

"Well, we have got through with 'Marse' now."

"Aint we goin' back to Zanesville?"

" No, we are going further than that! "

" Lordy, I 'se glad, but I radder go back and take the chances of the cotton fields than b'long to Marse Hoskins—he work from sun-up to dark and no chance to rest. Where you say we goin' ? "

" I did n't say—but I tell you now, we are going to Connecticut. "

" How far am it ? "

" Seven hundred miles. "

" Golly! has you money to buy chuck ? "

" People will not charge us for food—we will have to stop and work along the way to get money for bridge toll, though. "

" How much money has you now ? "

" Just twenty-five cents. "

" Lordy, we 'll never git there. "

" Yes, I think we will arrive. "

" Well, I 'se your nigger—you owns me now. "

" No, I don't—you are free. "

" Don't you want me ? "

" Yes, I want you to go with me. "

" Why, I b'longed to Marse Silverton: I got free; and if I 'm free I b'longs to me, and I can give me to you—see ? "

" No, I don't see—you are a fool. I told you that the Western Reserve belonged to Connecticut and that slaves brought into the State from elsewhere were free. Now do you understand ? "

" Marse Hoskins said I was his. "

" Well, you were not. "

" Then I b'longs to no one ? "

" Certainly not. "

" Not even to me ? "

" Don't talk me to death, Jim Golden—that 's your

name now—don't talk me to death—slide off and walk a ways now. We must save Nancy."

Jim slid off and trotted along in silence. From time to time Jim would ride, then John would walk. That first day they made twenty miles. At night they stopped at a settler's cabin. Every hospitality was extended to them, and the statement that they were brothers and were going East to bring back cattle was accepted without question.

The good woman of the house remarked that they looked alike: it is very easy to see family resemblance, as anyone can testify who has an adopted child in the family. John had instructed Jim not to talk, and the boy obeyed so well that the folks thought him deaf and dumb. John was not inclined to say much either, so at breakfast the host shifted from one subject to another in hopes of saying something of interest. The weather had been fully discussed, religion touched on, then politics, and finally the man said:

"There 's goin' to be a hoss race down at the Cross Roads this afternoon!"

"What 's 'at! what 's 'at!" exclaimed Jim, all of a quiver in an instant.

"Why, I thought you could n't talk."

"Whaffer 'bout that hoss race?"

"Nothing, only there 's a hoss race down at the Roads last Saturday in every month—great goin's on, ten-dollar purse—everybody runs that wants to."

Jim could eat no more breakfast, but at a kick from John under the table, he kept still.

No charge was made for the accommodation, and at once after breakfast the boys shook hands with the kind people and started away.

Once out of sight of the house, Jim slid off the horse

and pulled John with him. He threw his arms around the other's neck and cried:

"It 's oun, it 's oun, it 's oun!"

"What is ours, lunatic?"

"That ten dollars! It 's oun, it 's oun, it 's oun!"

They walked on slowly, leading the horse. Jim was half crazy over the prospect and was sure that Nancy could win in any "scrub race."

John had conscientious scruples on the subject of horse-racing. It was a positive sin, as much so as card playing.

"But you don't bet," explained Jim, who had heard both sides of the argument—"You don't bet, you jest lets the mare gallop, and if she goes over the scratch 'fore the others, they gives you the ten dollars—see?"

John saw and decided after all that it was not a positive sin—the Bible said nothing about it, and if they captured the ten dollars, it would mean just the wages of ten days' work.

They reached the Cross Roads, a thriving place, consisting of a blacksmith shop, a church, a store and a tavern.

The two boys mounted on the horse and approached the tavern, where the landlord sat smoking on the veranda.

"Going to be a horse race here this afternoon, I hear," remarked John.

"You 've got it, young man—'light, and make yourselves at home!"

"About that race—can we go in?"

"Certainly, it 's free for all. It brings trade here, you know, makes fun for the boys, and then encourages the breeding of good horses."

The landlord was a glib sort of fellow—evidently from "York State." He owned a half interest in the

store, and being prosperous, was a man who might be honest.

“ Put your horse in the barn and come in and take something. I say, has your nag ever been in a race ? ”

“ No,” answered Jim, who was willing to relieve John from the onus of telling a lie, “ no, but we wants to see if she can run.”

The landlord followed the boys to the barn. He looked Miss Nancy over carefully, then called the hostler and they consulted together.

“ ‘Er is a dam good ‘orse,” remarked the hostler, as he felt of her hocks. “ An’ wot ’s more if ‘er can go as well as ‘er looks, it ’s all up with the rest.”

The landlord had a good horse of his own: the horse had won the race the month before, and the fact that his horse could probably beat the rest, likely had something to do with his liberality in offering the stake. In other words, there was a string tied to the purse.

“ Would you mind showing what your horse can do—just a canter, you know.”

John objected: Jim did n’t know. They both realized that they were in the hands of a sharper; still sharpeners may be fair, and the honor that exists among thieves is often nearer genuine than that which is supposed to exist among honest men. Our sins differ in quality, not quantity.

“ Only a canter! see here now, leave this to me; if your horse can go, I ’ll make you a dollar—I ’m white, I am.” Jim turned pale at this allusion to color and then got his tongue enough to affirm, “ So am I.”

Both boys were relieved when the landlord did not dispute it: he was intent on horse, he emitted horse at every pore.

“ Only a canter, walk down the road a bit and let ‘em

come back easy-like. Get out Hurricane, Harris, and one of the boys will go with you."

There was no way but to follow the will of this stronger mind.

Hurricane was led out. He was a dock-tailed hunter, big and bony. John's heart sank at the sight of the beautiful animal as the blanket was stripped off. It took two men to saddle him.

"He can't run, Marse Himbook—he can hurdle, but he can't run as fast as a cow," whispered the excited Jim.

"I'm your brother—call me John—be careful now."

The English hostler took off his coat, exchanged his hat for a cap and rode the big, rearing, plunging horse up the road, followed by the meek and seemingly tired Miss Nancy.

The road ran through the bottom-land, level as a floor. After they had gone a half mile they turned and started back on a canter; they increased it to a gallop, which soon settled into a run. Hurricane now had his head and ran in great lunging springs. By his side, neck and neck, was Miss Nancy moving with a light, quick, nervous patter. She ran low, her nose straight out in front and her back as straight as the top rail of a fence. They shot past the hotel exactly side by side, eased down, stopped and came back.

"Why did n't you beat him, you miserable John Bull!" called the landlord.

"I did n't want to, don't you know, Sir," replied the Englishman.

Hurricane was all excitement and covered with foam. The roan mare had scarcely turned a hair.

John was as excited as was the black racer, but a long solemn wink from his "brother Jim" gave him confidence.

The horses were put back in the barn. In the box stall where Hurricane was kept, the landlord and his agent were having it out in an undertone.

“ Why did n’t you pull away from him, you fool ? ”

“ Pull away from ’im, Sir ? that mare is a ghost—she ’angs like a shadder—you cawn’t pull away from a ’orse like that—you cawn’t do it, you know. I ’d back ’er on Epsom Downs, for the Derby plate, Sir, I would, be Gawd ! ”

The landlord came out.

“ So you are brothers, are you ? ”

“ Yes,” said Jim.

“ And you, Freckledy, are going to ride in the race this afternoon, are you ? ”

“ Why yes, you said we might ! ”

“ And so you may. Now my horse can beat you—my man Harris did n’t let him out at all just now. Still, you are good fellows—I always like to encourage the young—was a boy once myself—I want you to win this race. Here ’s five dollars and if you win it, you get the ten—you hear ? Now we are strangers—don’t either of you speak to me the rest of the day.”

He counted the five silver dollars out into the hands of John Brown and walked out of the barn. Jim tumbled over into an empty stall and acted as though he was having a fit. He rolled over and stood on his head and tied himself in a knot with his feet around his neck.

After sundry kicks from John, he came to, sat up and chuckled :

“ It ’s ourn, it ’s ourn, it ’s ourn ! ”

It was yet early in the forenoon and very few people were about, but in an hour men and women on horse-back began to appear. Then ox-carts and people afoot ; girls in white, women with babies, barefoot men in jeans,

and by noon nearly five hundred people were picnicing in the little grove back of the tavern. Every tree and post that could be seen had a horse tied to it.

In the bar room whiskey flowed over the counter like water, and every seat at the long table in the dining-room was taken by a man in shirt sleeves. As fast as one got up, another took his place.

Harris took our two boys around to the kitchen and piled their plates with corned beef, cabbage and potatoes. Then came a blackberry pie that was divided into two parts and stowed away, all without a word.

After dinner the crowd increased and John noticed that the landlord was flourishing money and making a great bluff at backing Hurricane; and all the time the bartender was quietly taking as many bets as possible on the roan mare.

Back in the grove, there was a dancing platform and the screech of a fiddle could be heard.

The program of the day began with a blindfold race of fifty yards; then a chase for a greased pig; and after this a foot race.

It was a queer crowd, made up of a different class of people from that which John had ever seen before. Mostly New York people, John thought, and folks from New Jersey and Maryland who had fallen into the ways of certain Virginians who had moved into the neighborhood.

It took a good while to get around to the prime event of the day, but when at last the horse race was called there was a buzz of excitement; the screeching fiddle ceased and people came trooping from the grove, the tavern and every direction.

Full a dozen horses moved down the level road to a big tree a mile away. Several were just plain, sturdy plow

horses, ridden by farmers' boys; others were ponies, one was a pacing saddle horse, then there was the docked hunter and the sober little roan mare, ridden by a bare-foot boy, whose close cropped hair might have been red, and who was very freckled. John climbed a tree that stood by the roadside, and clear off down the valley he saw the flag drop. There was a wild scamper of horses coming towards him. They got away in a solid mass, but soon strung out.

Hurricane was in front and the little roan mare clear behind.

John's heart sank within him and he could have cried for very shame. He glanced away and when he looked again there was still an Indian file procession, save that Miss Nancy was creeping up at one side. John breathed freer. In another instant Hurricane and the roan were neck and neck, moving as a double team.

On they came.

"It 's a tie, it 's a tie," came the excited shout from a score of throats. They were within fifty yards of the scratch—forty—thirty, and the roan shot forward a full length, and crossed the mark two lengths ahead.

A stout man holding a watch in one hand and ten silver dollars in the other stepped off the hotel veranda. Making his way through the crowd, he handed up the money to Jim Golden without a word.

Jim looked about for John and soon saw him up in the tree: he closed one eye in a long, solemn wink that said very plainly, "I told you so."

John slid down and the boys were putting on their saddle getting ready to go. The landlord came pushing through the crowd: "You aint going, boys?"

"Yes."

"Why, you must n't—stay until to-morrow, it won't

cost you a cent—you shall have the best room in my house! ”

“ No, we must go,” answered John.

“ Now look here, boys, you just sha’n’t do it—to-morrow is Sunday, anyway, you know.”

“ That ’s so, I forgot,” said John.

“ That ’s right, be sensible—this fool crowd will be out of the way soon and then we can visit.”

“ Shall we stay, Jim ? ”

“ Yes, that pie was just right—p’r’aps there ’s another ! ”
So they stayed.

CHAPTER XV

QUIETING QUALMS, AND MORE ADVENTURE

STRETCHING south from Erie was a wagon road to Pittsburg. By the aid of appropriations from the Government, which used the road for military purposes, this road had attained to the respectability of a turnpike. From Erie, mails were regularly dispatched by boat to all points on the Great Lakes; and thus Erie came to be a very important place in stage-coach times.

The “ fast mail ” that made the trip daily from Erie to Pittsburg at the wonderful speed of nine miles an hour, was a great inciter of “ horse ” in the minds of the citizens. At the relay stations, every fifteen miles, the taverns did a good business, and farmers who had horses fit to take a place in the fast mail service got good prices for their steeds. For a space of ten miles east or west of the turnpike, the settlers had gone horse crazy, and thought nothing of taking a day off to see a “ hoss-race.”

When night settled down at the Cross Roads the crowd

had disappeared. There was left behind a stale odor of beer and tobacco, whiskey and hard cider, pickles and ginger bread. A banquet hall deserted is not to be compared in point of desolation to a picnic ground forsaken.

The few visitors who had that peculiar temperament that "gets drunk in the legs" were bundled off into the haymow. John and Mr. Marden, the landlord, sat on the porch, enjoying the cool of the day. Out in the road in front Harris was slowly leading Hurricane back and forth; behind him trailed Jim with Miss Nancy.

They had had a good supper, John had eight dollars in his pocket, Jim had seven and the landlord had several hundred and the Englishman had more than he needed, all as the result of one day's work.

"Yes, it's a godsend to these hard-working people—a picnic like this—it rests 'em and does 'em good morally and physically," said the altruistic landlord.

"How, morally?" asked John.

"Makes 'em happy—they forget their troubles—all people have trouble—even you perhaps, young as you are. Now have n't you had a good time?"

John admitted that he had.

"Well, that's what we're here for—to make other folks happy—that's my religion."

"I—I—that is, I did not know before that you were religious."

"Well, I am not so dam religious, but I give more to that church over there than all the town put together!"

"What is it—Methodist?"

"Well, I reckon not—we had a Methody preacher here, but he had too much to say on the horse question and the boys told him to take a walk. No, sir-ee, this is Church of England—same church that George Washington belonged to!"

“ Indeed! ”

“ Yes, I see you are religious, too; you must go with me to-morrow—sit in my pew! ”

Harris and Jim had put up their horses, and now came over, each chewing a straw.

“ Well, my lads — how do you feel? ” asked the landlord.

Harris put on an air of gloom, as an Englishman always does when he is supremely content; Jim grinned.

“ Quite a horse you ’ve got, Freckles, and you ride like a regular jock! ”

Jim broadened the grin.

“ It ’s none o’ my business, but I half believe you know a deal more ’bout horse racing than you let on. ”

“ That horse of ourn was hitched up with a cow and at work all the fore part of the week. ”

The landlord gave a long, low whistle, then burst into a laugh: “ Hooked with a cow! ”

“ Yes, that ’s what I said. ”

“ Well, I ’ve an idea. ”

“ What is it? ”

“ Hitch her up again with a cow, then drive over to Hemlockville on the turnpike and clean out the boys! Ha, ha, ha, ha! ! ”

The night was warm, so Jim preferred to throw down a bundle of hay and sleep in the barn, thus following the example of Harris; for between these two there was quite an affinity.

The next morning Mr. Marden was not feeling very well, so did not care to go to church; Harris seldom attended and Jim did not care to go, so John and Mrs. Marden—a trim little woman—tripped off alone.

It was John’s first experience in an Episcopal church. At first he was inclined to resent the signs of “ popery ”

that he detected, but the soft playing of the melodeon, and gentle thoughts of a girl in blue who also probably was at that moment in an Episcopal church, soon put him in a different frame of mind.

The chancel was trimmed with green branches and wild flowers, and the little attempts at beauty meant much to his sensitive, receptive nature.

The sermon was very short and no reference was made to the sin of horse-racing. The prayers and responses were dignified, the singing was better than he had ever heard, the little melodeon was so well played that it sort of brought the tears to John's eyes.

Only a few people were present but they were all so quiet, so polite and so refined that John could not bring himself to think that they could really believe in horse-racing. His conscience was troubling him, and if he could only keep that quiet, he thought he would be really happy. The eight silver dollars were heavy in his pocket and did not give that peace to his soul that they should have lent. When the plate was passed he dropped in one of those dollars and felt considerably better: his money was being used for the service of God.

He resolved that when the meeting was out, he would wait and ask what the preacher thought of horse-racing.

Mrs. Marden was very glad to introduce him to the clergyman. The clergyman was very glad to meet him—had noticed him in fact—it was a joy to preach to such a receptive listener, etc. John was pleased; he had decided he would not trouble such a nice man with a foolish question. He had started away and had reached the church door, when a sudden determination seized him and he went back and hurriedly asked the rector in a whisper:

“ Is it wrong to race horses ? ”

“ Once more, please—I did not understand.”

“ Is it a sin to race horses ? ”

The clergyman laughed softly, looked at the boy and said :

“ Oh no, not if you run a good honest race.”

“ Then I suppose one should make good use of his money if he wins.”

“ Why, certainly, the money must be used for a good purpose ! ”

“ Thank you,” said John and hurried away.

“ Does the preacher live here ? ” asked John.

“ No, he lives in Hemlockville, but supplies both places.”

The next morning when John looked out of his window towards the stable, he noticed that the big barn doors were closed and he could hear loud laughter coming from within. He hurried down and there on the barn floor he saw a sight that made his eyes bulge with amazement.

Marden, Harris, and Jim had hitched a four-year-old black ox up to a rickety old cart, and there harnessed alongside of that dark complexioned beast was the roan mare.

John looked on with flashing eyes—it was a vile indignity to Miss Nancy—an ox, and a black one at that. The ox was peacefully chewing his cud, and Miss Nancy took the situation as a matter of course. John was mad :

“ Keep quiet, my friend, lay low, and you shall have this ox and cart for your day’s work.”

“ Ha, ha, it ’s ourn, it ’s ourn, it ’s ourn ! ” laughed Jim as he stood on his head in the hay.

“ You see, there ’s a rascal of a landlord over on the turnpike that I want to get even with,” continued Marden. “ He ’s awfully stuck up and thinks he has the best horses on earth. Now, if you drive over with this old rig

and a lot of traps in behind, I will go on ahead and when you get there, I 'll bluff him into a race—you can beat him, I know, and if you do, I 'll give you the ox and cart."

"It 's deceiving him, though."

"No, it 's not, you run your horse against his and I give you the ox for pay."

A thought came that sounded like, "It 's no sin if you run a good honest race—it 's no sin if you run a good honest race!"

So after breakfast they started away in the cart. Miss Nancy was the most sensible horse one ever saw. She accepted the world as she found it and did the will of her master, asking no questions. Aside from a few nips at Sambo's neck she did not draw the color line, and made no boast of her royal blood. And as for Sambo, he lumbered along at a good fast gait for so fat an ox.

A few burrs in the tail of each, and a splash or two of mud added to the general untidiness of the mismating; while the rope lines, chain harness and the old boxes in the cart made an outfit not unlike those that came from over the hills and far away, and such as one can see in the Southland even yet.

"Ask the way to Hemlockville," shouted Marden as he rode on ahead, "and good luck to you."

It was near noon when they turned into the dusty stage road that led to Hemlockville, a mile beyond. They could see a church spire lifting itself out of the trees, and soon they came to a tavern which seemed to be quite a busy place. The stage with four horses attached had just whisked up with a cracking of the long whip and a blowing of horns. A half-dozen passengers got down from the top and several others alighted from the inside. Loafers and idlers appeared from nobody knew where.

In front of the tavern was a watering trough, and straight to this trough moved the black ox and his mate.

"I tell you, your horse is a plug—he can't run as fast as a sheep!"

"Can't eh!"

"No, he 's a dunghill—why that crow-bait there at the trough can beat him!"

"Have you any money that says so?"

"Yes, I have, I 'll bet you twenty-five dollars."

"I 'll just take that! Here, Captain—you hold these stakes."

They were loud angry voices and the crowd had gathered around and were cheering them on.

"Here, young fellow, can your horse run?"

"Never was in a race!" bawled back Jim Golden.

"Well, that 's no difference—just unhitch him and gallop him for half a mile against this lunatic's dunghill and I 'll give you a dollar, whether or no."

Marden flung the dollar out into the dust and Jim jumped down and picked it up. John and Jim began to unhitch: more loafers and hangers-on appeared.

It was time for the stage to start, but the passengers begged that the driver hold on for a few moments that they might see the race. In fact several of them had made small bets among themselves, and even the driver had put up a dollar.

The horse that was to run against Miss Nancy was brought out, saddled and bridled. He was a bay thoroughbred, and a good one. But there was a hitch somewhere about the distance or the judges, and the longer the delay, the greater the excitement.

"I tell you I saw this roan mare run last Saturday—this is a trick—she is a race horse. If you bet against her, you lose."

John looked around and saw that the speaker was none other than the clergyman he had heard preach the day before: he was button-holing a friend. John made no sign of knowing him, but pushed through the crowd and made the discovery that men were betting on Miss Nancy. But the strangers on the stage coach were putting up money on the bay.

Jim mounted the mare bareback, and away they went down the road. It was to be a half-mile dash.

Soon came the cry:

"They 're off—they 're off!"

There was a cloud of dust, the crowd parted and the horses could be seen coming neck and neck. They held this position until they were within ten yards of the stretch, when the bay drew away and came in ahead by half a length.

"The bay wins," called the judge.

John was humiliated. What would Marden say? But he soon found out what Marden would say. That worthy came and with his back half turned to him said:

"That steer is yours, and so is the cart—you better git!"

It was a disorderly crowd, and John thought it best to take Marden's advice and "git." So did Jim.

They hitched up and moved away, while the stage went off with a rush in the other direction.

Once safely out of town, John spoke:

"Could n't you beat him, Jim?"

"Yes, but golly, it would 'a' cost money, see this!"

He handed over a ten-dollar bill.

"Where did you get this?"

"Me? Marse Marden, he give it to me 'cause I lost—'Let the bay in first and you have the steer, the cart and this,' says he, and so I did."

“ And was he betting on the other horse ? ”

“ For sure ! that preacher man, he told ’em to bet on us—that we was foolin’ ’em—so the two landlords bet on the bay, and the bay he win—ha, ha, ha ! ! ”

John’s conscience was again getting troublesome. It had not been an honest race : but the only thing he could do was to use the money for a good purpose.

But was n’t it a curious thing—this horse-racing ! They had run two races, once they had beaten and both times they had made money.

Jim launched out into wonderful tales of racing at Zanesville when he rode Colonel Silverton’s horses ; but John paid little attention to this chatter, his thoughts being far away.

But he had decided on one thing, once for all : that was that he would thereafter “ run an honest race,” and of this he was very sure, “ he would use his money for a good purpose.”

CHAPTER XVI

TRAGEDY CAMPS ON THEIR TRAIL

THEY stopped at a farmer’s that night and the kind tiller of the soil offered to trade them a black ox for their horse, so they would have a matched team, but the boys declined. Then he offered to trade them a horse for their ox, but this was also refused.

“ We raised him from a calf,” said Jim, “ and we love him ’cause he ’s an orphan.”

“ Are you an orphan ? ” asked the man.

“ Yes. ”

“ And if you were black, you ’d make a good nigger.”

“ And if you were black, you ’d be a nigger yourself,” retorted John.

They rigged a pair of adjustable shafts for the cart, and led Miss Nancy behind. And so they traveled straight towards Pittsburg, or Fort Duquesne, as it was still often called.

John had decided on a system; and they began working it out with a regularity that might have set an example to the planets.

When they would get near a town they would hitch the ox and horse together. They would approach the village tavern and find the man who owned the barn. Then John would simply ask if he wanted to race horses. The solemn, business-like manner of the boy would usually raise a laugh or cause a smile of wonderment, at least. About half of the time the man addressed would say, yes: and if he did not have a running horse of his own, would find someone close at hand who had.

John did not bet: he made a purse; he put in ten dollars and the other man ten dollars. No more and no less, and it was a half-mile dash or nothing.

Miss Nancy knew her business and could get away like a flash of lightning. She was never beaten and she would run as fast or as slow as Jim desired. Once they got cheated out of their money by the stakeholder running away, but only once. John found that there was considerable honor about the business of horse-racing after all; for even gambling has its code—its sins that are venial and its sins that are mortal: and its unpardonable sin is to turn “Welsher” and run away with the stakes.

The mails from the South reached Pittsburg by the three rivers that meet there, and there were also stage roads leading in several directions. But the business

road of all was the one leading to Philadelphia. It was a vast artery of traffic. By sticking to this stage road, the boys kept in a "horse country." The relay tavern always supported a crack runner, and sometimes several. An average of one race a day was secured by applying at every barn. Several times they stopped even two or three days to accommodate horses that were sent for. It was always ten dollars and half a mile; just that or nothing.

Occasionally John's conscience would awaken; he was not very happy any of the time; but so peculiar is this second self that sits over against us, and passes judgment on our acts, that it usually allows the end to justify the means. The Jesuitical conscience is primarily an honest one—it does this or that, that good may follow; and after all, who shall decide when this maxim is right or wrong, "By their fruits ye shall know them"?

Then there is concrete wisdom—or folly—in the proverb that all is fair in love and war. Even at the early age of sixteen young Brown looked at life as a struggle for existence, although Darwin was a name he never knew.

He was a "soldier of the cross"; life was a "warfare"; and to undo the "infidel" was proper and right—this was his inward argument, and the other self for a time was silenced. And the reason that the substance of the infidel is not now taken for holy purposes, as in the days of the Canaanites, is simply because the infidel strenuously objects, and we have a modicum of caution that forbids the attempt. But having done the act, man can justify himself in anything.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles committed the two crimes at which society does not wink—the last one was murder: she was hanged. Yet Thomas Hardy, Prophet,

Philosopher, Philanthropist, uses for his sub-title these words: *The record of a pure woman.*

Young Brown was not a sinner—but pish, we are getting serious! These boys had a beautiful and a very intelligent little horse, and this horse could run very fast. So these boys bet that this horse could run faster than horses owned by other people. And as for the burrs in Miss Nancy's tail and mane, and the chain harness and rope lines, and the black ox, Sambo, who looked on with big, open, wondering eyes, we will say nothing. No one surely can be so captious as to condemn Sambo. Probably he wished he could run, too, and perhaps Miss Nancy and he talked the thing over by themselves.

Anyway, Sambo cropped the short, green grass along the roadside, and was very happy. He was no stalled ox, and in his black hide there was no hate. Then Miss Nancy was content and took a quiet pride in her smooth, dexterous strength. Jim Golden was more than jubilant, and chuckled to himself. John was serious, sober and in earnest.

His face had grown long and had taken on a manly turn. His eyes were large and wide apart, his chin strong, his mouth firm, but there was about the lad an abstracted far-away intentness that youth is better off without. They had reached Philadelphia. Sewed up in a belt John carried three hundred dollars.

"What you goin' to do with all your money, I dunno?" asked Jim.

"Yes, I was going to explain—that money is to be sent to Colonel Silverton to pay for Miss Nancy and when we get enough I'll pay for you, too!"

Jim was astonished. Why pay money to Colonel Silverton? He was far away—did not even know their whereabouts—besides, he had enough money anyway.

But John explained that in Ohio colored men and horses were property. They must not be taken away unless they were paid for, and at last Jim was satisfied. In fact it could not be otherwise, for his mind must shape itself after the other's.

So John wrote a letter to Colonel Silverton, telling him he had taken the horse and boy because it seemed God's plan; but that they should be paid for to the last cent. He sent the three hundred dollars on account and asked Colonel Silverton to send a receipt to Plainfield, Conn., in care of Rev. Doctor Melden.

The letter and money were placed in a canvas bag, and this tied up and sealed by the express agent; a tag was addressed bearing the inscription: Col. Maurice Silverton, Zanesville, O.

John had only ten dollars left in his pocket, Jim had a few cents more, but what of that: they had Miss Nancy and she could earn more! so John patted the pretty mare, and Jim kissed her on the nose and they moved on out of the city.

Bordentown, but a few miles up the Delaware River from Philadelphia, has been a great horse town from the time of Washington.

The boys applied at the stage barn as usual and found quite a stable of racers. John offered to run his horse against any one of them.

The purse was made up and full fifty men adjourned to the race track across the fields. With little preliminary, the flag fell and the horses got away quickly. The horse that ran against Miss Nancy was a black stallion and a fast one. He kept his lead for full half the distance, when Jim sent Miss Nancy forward. Her nose came even with the other's flank—then to the saddle—then neck and neck. Jim knew exactly what he was

doing—he could send the mare ahead at any instant—the other horse was doing his best. The rider of the black applied his whip, but the horse could not respond. The reckless rider in anger reached forward and struck Miss Nancy a slashing blow over the head. The whip struck her in the eye and she swerved to one side; in her blindness she dashed full against the fence. Horse and rider fell in a heap. Jim scrambled out unhurt.

John came running out on the track, and as he approached, the mare struggled to her feet and whinnied. She stood on three legs, for the right fore leg was broken in two places so that the jagged bones protruded through the skin.

Again the mare called and put out her nose to her young master in a mute appeal for help.

At a glance John saw the extent of her injury.

He drew from his pocket a sheath-knife, and feeling softly for the pulsing jugular, sent the keen blade home with one strong stroke.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DESTINATION REACHED AT LAST

THE rider of the black hotly denied that he had struck the other horse. All saw him do it, but the strangers were boys and these were men. The stakeholder decided that the roan mare had swerved from the track on account of "blind staggers," and as the black horse came in first, his owner was entitled to the money.

Sambo was lying down in the dusty road peacefully chewing his cud. Jim fell on his neck and cried aloud, and Sambo ceased chewing and looked up at him and was sorry.

Sambo arose to his feet and John and Jim got into the cart; and they went lumbering out of the village, followed by the jeers and laughter of the tavern loafers.

At Trenton the boys found work at a farmer's, and hoed corn for three days, each getting a dollar for his toil: then they moved on toward New York.

John read *Plutarch* aloud as the slow miles were turned off, and Jim was interested to about the same extent that Sambo was, save when there was fighting or chariot racing. In which case he would usually take sides, and if "his side" won he would be jubilant, or if it lost he would be depressed.

But John had a buoyant spirit and his hope was high, yet over it all was a tinge of gray.

"What is you goin' to do when you git there, John?" asked Jim one day.

"I'm going to study—get an education. My mother's brother—my own mother's brother, lives at Plainfield, you know—he is a preacher and always wanted me to come there. He has hundreds of books and I am going to read them all."

"Lordy! but you will be smart; and what am I to do?"

"Oh, there is plenty of work there—you can always get good wages."

And so it came to pass that after many days' journeying they reached the thriving village of Plainfield. They enquired the way to the residence of the Rev. Dr. Melden and were directed to a little house that stood in a grove of pines. The house was painted white and it had green blinds, and this looked very gorgeous to the boys, for only the very, very rich painted their houses "out West."

A sinking came over John's hopeful attitude now that

the end of the journey had been reached. He had never seen this uncle—had only heard him spoken of—and Doctor Meldon sort of loomed out of the misty nothingness like one of *Plutarch's* heroes. And whose heart would not beat fast when approaching a home where he was about to ask for Mr. Lucullus!

Then John took a swift inward glance and he perceived that this long journey was not so much to find Dr. Meldon as to get away from his own restlessness and satisfy some seething, undefined ambition. He would have turned and gone away; or if the man of whom he had just enquired had said that Dr. Meldon had been dead for ten years, he would not have been very much disappointed.

They left Sambo to graze by the roadside and were now walking toward the house. The place looked restful and inviting there in its mass of sheltering green. It commanded respect and the boys moved around to the back door as a matter of course. An elderly Irish woman answered their rap.

"Yis, the Docthur lives here—are ye's beggars, I dunno?"

"No, ma'am, we are n't beggars, we are—"

"Niver mind if ye be—even if ye be beggars, it's all the same to him providin' ye air clane—he'll feed nobody that 's dhirty! He 's takin' his nap—ye'll just have time to take a schrubbin' in the creek down yander and the Docthur 'ull be up—"

"You mean we should go swimming? It's October!"

"An' don't I schrub me flure in November? It's Injun summer—go on wid ye—I'll never lit ye into the presence loike that!"

John looked at Jim; Jim looked at John.

John saw that Jim was travel-stained, dusty, dis-

heveled, as men who sleep in their clothes always are. Haymows, barns, caves, and the earth had placed their odors and marks on the boys.

"You do need a cleaning up," said Jim to John.

"But not so bad as you," said John to Jim.

The woman pointed the way to the creek, and handing them each a coarse towel, they started away.

While the boys are taking a much needed bath, let us say a word about the man who owned the white cottage.

Dr. Melden was what we would to-day call a superannuated minister. He was near eighty years of age, and men thirty years of age said they had not seen a particle of change in the man or in his way of life since they stole his cherries in childhood. If you had asked the neighbors how long he had lived in Plainfield, they would have replied: "Always."

From an orthodox point of view we cannot state Dr. Melden's religious convictions. His opinion on original sin, the vicarious atonement, justification by faith, election of the saints and the state of the heathen who die in sin, are all matters of conjecture. In his younger days he had been very zealous in the faith and had defended the letter of the creed with great power; but some people thought his mind had given way just a little, for on the doctrinal points of theology he could not now be brought into an argument.

Occasionally he would preach for the regular pastors round about when they went on journeys or vacations; couples would sometimes come to him from long distances to be married, as a sort of superstition had gotten out that his blessing had a potency beyond that of other ministers, and this belief had spread among parents, too, as many children were brought to him for baptism.

He was kind, gentle, benevolent, cheerful, and had no

word of blame for any man or anything. His life was pure affirmation. He said, "Do this," but never, "Thou shalt not."

Such a man as this is always a sort of central sun around which swing the lesser planets: there were always a half-dozen—more or less—of young men preparing for college who came to him to recite. If these youths had money they paid him small sums for their instruction, and if they had no money it made no difference—they were just as welcome.

So it will be seen that Doctor Melden had a little income: it was not much, but his wants were few and so he lived, filling his days full of good work in study, giving instruction or tilling his little farm.

Only two persons lived in the white cottage with Dr. Melden—these were an old Irish couple. Paddy McBride and his wife had their apartments and Dr. Melden had his two little rooms. His table was spread in the room that served for study and parlor, while Paddy and Mrs. McBride ate in the kitchen. This made quite a little scandal, years before, among the neighbors, because it proved the pride of the Doctor; but these good people quite forgot how a mob had threatened to drive old Paddy and his wife out of town because they were Catholics, and hearing of it, Dr. Melden had at once hired them to come and work for him. This made their position secure, for old Dr. Melden had the respect of three-fourths of the people in the neighborhood and the love of the rest.

And in the interest of unsullied truth, let us place on record the fact that Paddy McBride and his wife did not eat at the same table with Dr. Melden, simply because Paddy McBride and his wife preferred to eat by themselves.

The prefix of " Old " usually went with the Doctor's title, thus: Old Doctor Melden. And it is a significant fact that this word " Old " is either a reproach or a compliment, according to whether a man has lived good or ill.

In Old Doctor Melden's case the word " Old " was simply synonymous with " The Reverend."

The boys came back from the creek slightly improved in appearance, but greatly improved in feeling, for cleanliness is psychologic as well as ethical.

" The Docthur says to show ye in."

The boys pulled off their hats as boys do when they feel that they are approaching superiority, and entered the little parlor.

" Come right in, young gentlemen, come right in and tell me what I can do for you."

The old gentleman sat in an easy chair, an open book on his knees. His hair was snow white and his clean-shaven pink face beamed with good nature.

" I am—I am John Brown of the Western Reserve—I—"

" Yes, yes, my boy!"

The old man did not arise, but held out his hands. John approached and Old Doctor Melden's blue eyes half filled with tears as he said: " Yes, yes, you are my sister's boy. My! my! you are a fine strong fellow—you are surprised that I know you! and then how did I know that you were coming straight to me from the other side of the world? Clear from the Western Reserve! and this is not your brother—come closer, my lad, let me place my hand on your head—Goodness me! you've been in swimming! would n't Mrs. McBride let you see me until you had taken a bath? How that woman does literalize!"

The old man had the boys standing in front of him

and was looking them over with delight. The rags and travel stain were nothing to him.

"But who is this boy? You did not say, John, tell me."

"He is a negro, sir, he is a slave."

Out it came, suddenly, abruptly, all without thought. He had told that which he had inwardly vowed again and again he would reveal to no one.

In Connecticut he intended to swear, if necessary, that Jim Slivers was James Golden and that he was white, yet almost at the first sentence he had spoken truth. But then Doctor Melden invited truth—only once or twice in a lifetime do we meet a person to whom we may confess all.

"Oh, no, he 's not a slave," said the old gentleman—"he 's not a slave, he 's God's free child, just like you and me."

"No," said John, "you do not understand—I must tell you all about it. We ran away and stole a horse, we—"

"My dear boy, just tell Mrs. McBride I wish to see her—Oh, Bridget, please set the table for three—these are my nephews. Did you wet their heads?"

"Sure, and they needed it, yer honor! Yis, I 'll make tay at wanst."

Bridget tried to courtesy as she did in the days of her youth. She cast a suspicious glance at the two nephews. Old Doctor Melden was often imposed upon by mendicants: Bridget felt sure that this was only another item in the long list.

"Oh, I forgot, I have a letter for you, John, it came yesterday! It 's in that pigeon-hole—no, the other—bring the whole package, please."

John handed the old man the package; he took out

a blue-tinted missive and handed it to the mystified youth.

It was the first letter John Brown had ever received. He turned the packet over and looked at the seal, then he read the inscription, then the post-mark and in the corner his blurred vision made out these words:

FROM MARGARET SILVERTON,
ZANESVILLE, OHIO.

CHAPTER XVIII

DISTURBING NEWS FROM ZANESVILLE

HOW did the letter get here? John could not guess. He had forgotten that the stage coach made the astonishing time of eight miles an hour, day and night.

He broke the seal and unfolded the letter. A faint, undefinable odor of violets stole out upon his senses; he caught a vision of a blue dress, and his head began to swim.

“ Read it to me, please! ”

Dr. Melden took the letter, adjusted his glasses, and read:

ZANESVILLE, Sept. 15, 1816.

DEAR JOHN BROWN:

The money which you sent to my father was received last night. When Mamma read your letter she wept for joy to think that we had such a friend as you. You know the extent of our tribulation and you have adopted this most generous plan in order to assist us; but your delicacy in avoiding that which might wound our pride has had a peculiar effect on me. I would rather you had written frankly and plainly and then it would be easy for me to answer you with the same unreserved

frankness. You are good and noble and yet I have made you juggle with truth. You say you purpose sending us money to pay for the negro boy, Jim Slivers; when the real fact is that you did not take Jim Slivers. The seven slaves ran away, but they were all caught by the man who bought them, and sent South. And supposing you had Jim Slivers with you, would you write back here telling his owner of the fact?

You want to help me, and you assume that I do not know what became of Jim Slivers, so you tell me an untruth. This grieves me, for my dream is that you will never tell me or any one aught save fact. I am just your age, but at our time of life a woman is older than a man and so I take the liberty of advising you what to do.

You doubtless heard that my father's creditors all came upon him at once and took all of his property, including the homestead. You of course know, too, that his mind tottered and he died by his own hand, but I suppose that you did not know that both of my brothers have gone to New Orleans to find work, and were it not for the three hundred dollars you sent, Mamma and I would have been absolutely destitute.

If we had always been poor I would then have been taught to sew and cook and scrub, but as it is, I seem so helpless. As soon as my brothers find employment we will be cared for, and anyway, I can earn something.

I suppose you have gone to study so as to be a preacher, but how sudden it was—you did not tell me you were going right away!

Mamma and I are very sure that you will make a great and good man, and we pray every night that God may be with you and direct you aright.

With sincere regard, I am,

Yours,

MARGARET SILVERTON.

“What a gently sweet letter it is!” The old gentleman sighed as he took off his glasses. “What a sweet

letter—‘ we pray every night that God may direct you aright ’—why, do you know, boys—well, yes, it is a fact, I can show you a whole bundle of letters that my wife wrote me fifty years ago that sound like that—have the same sort of spiritual fragrance. Why, what ’s the matter, John ? ”

The youth’s eyes were glassy and his face was marble in its dumbness.

“ I—I—I did not understand what it was in that letter—will you read it again, and who did you say it was from ? ”

“ Oh, I did n’t read the signature—I ’m so careless—but my wife never signed her name at all—just filled up the page and stopped, and that last clause some way made me think of her. Now let me see, M-a-r- Margaret Silverton—that ’s the name, Margaret Silverton. It is headed Zanesville, no State, but probably Ohio—‘ Dear John Brown ’—”

The white-haired man read the letter through slowly, folded it and handed it back. John’s face burned scarlet—he stepped forward—the room seemed to spin—he burst into tears. The tall old man arose and folded him in his arms as he might a woman.

“ The supper things is gettin’ cowl’d an’ there ’ll be icicles on the tay pot if ye don’t ate soon ! ” said Mrs. McBride as she thrust her head in from the kitchen.

“ There, there ! we forgot all about supper—we three boys, together—and boys generally have good appetites, too. Sit here, John, and you, James, on the other side—never mind, Bridget, I can pour the tea—we like it a little cool, anyway ! ”

Mrs. McBride disappeared.

“ I ’ll wait on table if Marse Melden don’t mind, then I ’ll eat in the kitchen, afterward.”

"No, you sit down, James."

"I 'se caught and sent south," chuckled Jim as he sidled into a chair.

"Oh, so you are the Jim Slivers mentioned in the letter, are you?"

"No, I 'se gone south."

"Yes," said John with a look of rebuke at Jim. "Yes, his name is James Golden now, but he is the person that Mar—I mean Miss Margaret refers to. I don't understand it though, things have got so mixed."

"I see, you were trying to do good by stealth—sugar and milk in your tea? you can't deceive a good woman, though—help yourself to bread, James—I have tried it."

"But I have not tried to deceive anyone—I did not know at all about these troubles that have come to the Silvertons!"

"Is Marse de Kuhnel dead for sure?" asked Jim.

"Yes—Margaret says so—he died by his own hand."

"What 's that! killed hisself?"

"Yes."

"Shoot, drown, pizen or hang?"

"I do not know."

"Lordy, I 'll bet he hanged hisself in the barn—got up in the haymow, tied a rope to a rafter, then round his neck—count three and jump off into hell—he tried it once after he had been on a two weeks' booze!"

The free and easy tramp life they had been living; the stimulus of the sudden good fortune of being welcomed, together with the news of his old master's death, which he felt freed him, had tended to loosen Jim's tongue. He might have talked considerable were it not for a warning kick from John under the table which caused him to relapse into a sphinx-like silence. After supper he went out to attend to Sambo, who was grazing about just as if

a cart was a piece of natural impedimenta that every good ox should tolerate. Then he assisted Mrs. McBride in washing the dishes, much to that worthy woman's surprise that a boy could be so handy in a kitchen. And all the while he made the acquaintance of Mr. Paddy McBride, who had come from his work.

Meanwhile John sat on an ottoman at the feet of Old Dr. Melden, and told all concerning his acquaintanceship with the Silvertons: of how he had helped Slivers run away: of taking the horse, the racing, the sending the money to Zanesville, and of the death of Miss Nancy. Here Doctor Melden sighed. The death of the horse affected him strangely—it seemed to touch him like an old sorrow.

“ You killed her, John ? ”

“ Yes, I had to, her leg was broken, so I put her out of misery.”

“ Yes, yes—I forgot—it was only a horse—but then all life is from God! but you did it in pity, yes, it was right. But now you are here safe—I need you. Your mother used to write me long letters about you and tell me how she proposed to send you back here to study with me, and now you are here. No one wrote of your coming—only that letter came for you and then I sort of worked it all out in a dream. I knew you were on the way, so I was not surprised when you came. Now how old are you, John ? ”

“ Seventeen.”

“ Only seventeen—why I thought you were nineteen, at least—you might even pass for twenty. But Margaret loves you and you love her, and on such a love, I am sure that God smiles a benediction; but you are young, John; you must stay with me and study and you will become a great and good man; you will preach truth

to thousands; you will make the world better and you will do the work that I have neglected to do. You are only a boy now, but after a few years you can go back after Margaret and she will help you, but by that time I will be gone !”

“ Oh, no, you must wait until you see her.”

“ My wife died forty-one years ago, John—it only seems yesterday that she passed on, and do you know, my boy, I ’m growing a little impatient to go to meet her. If I were superstitious I might say her spirit is with me now; but never mind that, I must stay to help you.”

“ Docthur Melden, is the red-haired boy to shleep in the barn, I dunno—he ’s yawnin’ so you can see his back teeth, and tryin’ to prop his peepers open, he ’s that shleepy.”

“ Oh, I forgot him almost. Bring in the candles, please, and we will have prayers and the boys can go to bed—they will sleep in the spare room.”

“ An’ it ’s lucky fer the shates that I made ’em take a schwim !”

Paddy McBride put on his coat and made his toilet by running his fingers through his hair: then he entered the little parlor, followed by Jim and Mrs. McBride. Doctor Melden drew his chair up to the table and read a short passage from the Psalms; then all bowed their heads in silence. After a pause Doctor Melden repeated a brief prayer and John did not think it strange that he closed with the words: “ We pray that Thy watchful care will be over those whom we love, and in all their actions may they be guided aright. Amen.”

CHAPTER XIX

OH ! THE WEARINESS OF WAITING !

JOHN was making progress in his studies—very slow progress, he thought. He constantly reverted to the subject of co-education and he concluded that if he were studying with a certain tall, slender, fair-haired girl in blue he could solve any problem in mathematics that might be produced. Then grammar was hard—this parsing of sentences—but Margaret could understand and she would make it plain to him. Yet Dr. Melden was very patient, very gentle and always full of encouragement.

Every forenoon they worked at the lessons, and in the afternoons there was wood to chop, crops to gather or carpenter work to attend to, for labor with one's hands was a part of Dr. Melden's creed.

Jim had forsaken books for the saw-mill; he did a man's work and was getting rich at the rate of a dollar a day.

So winter settled down and the snow lay deep and smooth over the New England hills. Paddy McBride had fallen in love with Sambo and Sambo returned the affection, and between the two, great piles of wood were accumulating in the back yards of various neighbors; all of which added to Paddy's worldly prosperity. So all were very busy, and very happy. The presence of the young men in the house had given Dr. Melden a new lease of life, and he declared that Fate had reversed the flying spindle and that he was growing younger every day.

A letter was dispatched to Ruth Crosby, a long letter of news and good cheer and high hope. To be sure,

John's plans were a bit misty and undefined, but the spirit of self-reliance that they breathed warmed the heart of the Widow Crosby like wine.

She did not know that the boy had run away. No one in Hudson knew it except Squire Brown, and he was a diplomat: he just gave out the news quietly that he had sent the boy away to school.

"It's costly," said the Squire, "but when they gets it in their heads that book-learnin' is the thing, the only way to ondeceive 'em is to send 'em to school."

"And where did you send him?" someone asked.

"Well, now, I should think that you had known me long enough to know that I do not blab my private affairs on the street corners—I sent him to the best school there is, regardless of expense."

And so the matter rested. But when Ruth Crosby took that letter over for Squire Brown to read, that gentleman's heart thumped beneath his hickory shirt in a way that made him fear apoplexy. He excused himself and took the letter out behind the barn and read it.

Thank God, the boy was well! And thank God again, he did not explain that he had gone away without his father's consent.

Squire Brown took the letter in the house and handed it back carelessly with the remark—"Oh, it's 'bout the same he wrote me."

John had written full twenty letters to Margaret: only two of them had been mailed: the others were torn up as soon as penned. The first letter had been dispatched the day after his arrival at Plainfield. It was rather stiff and precise in its formal expressions of condolence, yet a deal more sincere than most similar messages. But after a week another letter of eight pages was sent. It was a genuine news letter and told of his studies, his work, of

Doctor Melden and Paddy McBride and Sambo, and then it swung back to Old Doctor Melden and it pictured him as the saint that he was. No reference was made to Jim; for the present it would be wise to let well enough alone.

The first letter had said, "I much regret to hear of the sad afflictions that the Lord has sent you." This one said, "I'm awful sorry for you, Margaret—I think of you all day and dream of you at night. I wish you would tell me what to do, for I want to send you something or do something for you, and so does my Uncle Melden, who is the best man that ever lived."

It was seven weeks before a letter came, postmarked Zanesville. Here it is:

Dec. 3, 1816.

DEAR JOHN BROWN:

Both of your letters are here and have been read several times over both by Mamma and myself. You are very good and kind to us. At this time you seem almost our only friend, for some of our old neighbors shun us now that our money is gone and we live in a rented apartment. Then there are rumors that father was dishonest in his dealings; and there are those who hint that we are living thus in poverty as a blind and that we have large sums of money secreted. You can imagine how such scandals wound us.

Mamma is quite ill—had not sat up for three days until yesterday, when an old friend of papa's came to visit us. His name is Captain Brydges—he is a widower and highly respected. His courtesy in calling on us seemed to infuse Mamma with a hope that our affairs might yet take a turn for the better.

We have not heard from my brothers since they went away—but we hope to soon.

Give Doctor Melden our love, and tell him that we respect

and revere him for all that he has done for you. How glad I am that you are doing so well in your studies!

Write me again and tell me of the books you read.

Sincerely Your Friend,

M. SILVERTON.

P. S.—I did not mail this letter yesterday, as the stage does not start until this noon. Do not worry about us. I have one pupil to whom I give music lessons, and hope for more. Captain Brydges called again last night. Mamma used to keep company with him when she was a girl. Is n't it funny that he should come back to see her after all these years?

MARGARET.

This letter placed the young man on the highest pinnacle of happiness. Its declaration of friendship, and its unrestrained confidence made him almost delirious with joy. He read the letter and Doctor Melden read it to him; and then it was read to Jim.

“I 'se gone south to the cotton fields—but read ahead!”

The real fact was that Jim was delighted to hear from Zanesville and his former “Missus.” There was a tie of blood that drew him to her—a tie that he never whispered aloud—but he realized its existence. The girl's happiness was Jim's and her sorrow his. And that she should still be hopeful and in good spirit was a consolation to him.

“I know that Captain Bridge,” said Jim, “he 's rich, he is. He lives in Kaintuck and has a whole town full of niggers, ha, ha, ha!”

“What are you laughing at, loon?”

“Ha, ha, he, he, ho!”

“Well, tell us what 's the matter!”

“What a joke if that Captain Bridge he marry Widow Silvertont!”

“ Oh, there ’s nothing strange in such an event,” said Dr. Melden, “ yet of course the fact that they were lovers in youth—well, such things have happened. I hope he is a worthy man!”

“ Oh, he ’s all sque-gee! He has a white goatee, and dresses to kill—I used to shine his shoes and my mammy had to iron his shirts—one every day. He has a gold watch chain ten feet long. I say, if they cotch me I s’pose I ’d b’long to Marse Bridge, would n’t I?”

“ We will take pains to see that they do not catch you,” quietly replied John.

Young Brown was slow in making acquaintances. People thought him exceedingly cold and reserved, and although the young people of the town sought to thaw him out they did not succeed.

One young man came near it. This was Walter Warren, son of the richest man in Plainfield, the man who owned the saw-mill. Walter was two years older than John and was studying for the ministry. He had been to Boston and New York, so was extensively traveled. He was a bright student and a young man of considerable culture. He came twice a week to recite Greek to Doctor Melden, and John looked on him as a model.

And on the other hand, Walter, knowing little of his friend’s history, but guessing much, regarded John as a hero. And the free and unrestrained manner of the young pioneer was as pleasing to the rich man’s son as the rich man’s son’s culture was to the other.

John was a bit ashamed of the adventurous life of toil and chance that he had led—not that there was anything especially disgraceful in it, but it did not harmonize with his pulpit ambitions. On the other hand Walter regarded all these privations and adventures as valuable experience that enriched one’s life. And so the two young men

came to enjoy the society of each other; each acted on the other as a stimulus. They grew quite confidential, and it was promised that after John had been duly ordained as a preacher—which of course would not be for several years—Walter would come out to Ohio and see him, and together they would go on evangelizing tours doing God's work, summoning men to repentance.

So John worked away at his lessons and was very happy, for over all his thoughts was a tinge of bright blue, not the tinge of melancholy, but the blue of the sky—or of a blue dress, and diffused in the air was a faint odor of violets.

In ten days there came another letter from Zanesville. It was hardly expected, for letter writing in those days of high postage was a luxury. Letters nowadays are a two-cent affair, but letters then carried an import proportioned to the postage. This letter was evidently written hurriedly: it was startling in its suggestiveness. It ran:

ZANESVILLE, Dec. 14.

DEAR JOHN BROWN:

There is still left of the money you sent us nearly one hundred dollars; and it seems that I should use this money for the purpose of getting away from Zanesville. The pupil I had in music has left me and there is nothing to which I can turn to earn a livelihood for myself and mother. I cannot think of going to our aristocratic kinsmen in Virginia, for there we would be but pensioners on others' bounty.

Perhaps I should state plainly that the cause of my agitation is that Captain Brydges has asked me to become his wife. He is very courteous, very respectful, and very kind. Most of his conversation is with Mamma, and he told her last night if I would marry him, he would buy back Silverside for our home.

Mamma does not dictate what I shall do, and although I promptly said "No," the Captain simply says that "I must

take a full fortnight to think it over." I will take three months and my answer will still be the same.

In a New England town, I might work with my hands, but here all work is done by blacks, and no respectable young woman goes out to earn her daily bread any more than they do in Virginia.

Do you think Dr. Melden could get me work in Plainfield—anything from governess to dish washing ?

Yours Truly,

M. SILVERTON.

P. S.—The greatness and goodness of Dr. Melden, as you have described him have appealed to me so that I seem to turn to him at once. Mamma does not know of this letter, but she will go with me, I know, wherever it seems best.

MARGARET.

John read the letter with sickening chills of fear, but the mood soon turned to exultant hope ; yet what to do, what to do ?

He gave the missive to Dr. Melden. The old gentleman read it very slowly, and then again.

" My boy, I have a plan. I 've been thinking it over for some days, and this letter makes the course plain." John listened breathlessly.

" Yes, John, I 'll tell you. I have six hundred dollars saved up and I cannot live very long anyway, and even if I should linger along for a while you would care for me. Now I feel that we should make James Golden a free man—legally free. We will send five hundred dollars to Margaret Silverton to pay for the boy ; we can then issue manumission papers and give him his freedom."

John's eyes filled with tears of joy. All along he had felt that he had stolen property ; the law of the land said so ; he must make restitution—not send Jim back, no ! he would fight first, but the slave must be paid for.

Now a way was opened, but it would take the savings that this saintly old man had been a lifetime in accumulating. Was not the sacrifice too great? Ah, but then to whom was the money to be sent? and how was she to use it? In coming straight to Plainfield—to him!

The youth did not know it, but he would have sacrificed not only this five hundred dollars but all the money to be had, and human life, if needs be, for the sake of getting Margaret Silvertown away from Zanesville.

His eyes shot fire as he reached out his hand toward the old man. Youth and age shook hands in a firm grasp.

"But that Captain Brydges—what a scoundrel!" John felt in his pocket.

"No, it's not there, boy, no one needs to carry such a wicked knife in this civilized country," smiled Dr. Melden. "I told you I put it away!"

John tried to answer smile with smile, but he only grimaced.

"And shall—shall we send the money at once, Uncle?"

"Yes, to-morrow. And we will tell Mrs. Silvertown and her daughter to come straight here. You know they are putting an organ into our church—someone must play, who so good as Margaret? I can find her pupils, too, in music. They can rent that little vacant house down by the river—Plainfield will be better for such gentle people."

"I think so," said John.

The old man smiled.

"And to-morrow we will send them word?"

"Yes, my boy."

So on the morrow five hundred dollars was sewed up stoutly in a canvas bag and duly dispatched to Zanesville to pay for one slave boy, by name, *i. e.*, "James Slivers."

John wrote a letter and Doctor Melden wrote a letter:

both urged immediate removal to Plainfield. Jim went to his work in the morning and back at night; he sang and laughed and worked, all oblivious of the fact that he had been bought with a price.

And John Brown resigned himself to that most wearisome of all wearisome tasks—waiting, waiting.

CHAPTER XX

JIM SLIVERS DISAPPEARS

THE days dragged their slow length along and each morning John checked them off on a Poor Richard Almanac.

A month passed—a month of steady work at long lessons that were only memorized and mumbled over; for we learn only in moments of animated, pleasurable concentration.

John had calculated the time that it would take for a letter to reach Zanesville and a reply to come back. Thirteen days was the quickest trip possible. But on the eleventh day he was down to the village when the New Haven stage arrived; he saw the leathern pouch tossed off; he watched it as it was carried into the post-office and then he waited until the letters were distributed. .

Next day he did the same, and the same the next.

On the thirteenth day he met the coach a mile out of town and ran beside it wondering at the manner of the driver who so carelessly flicked his whip, indifferent of the precious message in the bag beneath his feet. But there was no message for John Brown; no letter for Doctor Melden. Would the postmaster please look again?

The postmaster did so. There was no letter.

Neither did one arrive the next day, nor the next. Twenty-six days had come and gone. John had no appetite: he could not study: once when he went out to split wood he carried a hoe, and if Doctor Melden asked him to bring the grammar, he brought a history. He sat all day gloomy, abstracted. That night he paced the floor, and at breakfast Jim tried to rail him out of his melancholy.

The day wore away: the sky was heavy with leaden clouds, and gusts of snow now and again filled the air.

John tried to read, then to work. He could do neither.

He hoped that Jim would begin his prattling talk at supper—perhaps it would brighten his spirits a little.

But Jim did not come to supper. The victuals grew cold on the table, and John urged Doctor Melden to eat alone this time. He put on his cap and started off in the storm toward the saw-mill. All there was dark.

He went to the house of the foreman and found the good man calmly smoking his after-supper pipe in the chimney corner, while four children in their night clothes were frolicking on the floor before being put to bed.

No, the foreman had not seen Jim since he quit work.

Inquiry was made at the house of a workman close at hand. This man had seen two strangers in a sleigh waiting on the hillside—these men called to Jim and he had seen the boy go over to where they were—that is all he noticed.

John then began to ask at house after house. No, none had seen the freckled boy that lived with Old Doctor Melden.

At last a woman was found who had seen a boy—it might have been Dr. Melden's boy—seated in a pung between two men. She had passed them on the bridge at dusk, and she had heard one of the men say, "We will

kill you if you do not keep still." She thought they were trying to tie the boy's hands, but she had been too frightened to look closely. When they saw her one of the men shouted, "Is this the New Haven stage road?" and when she said, "Yes," they whipped the horse into a run and disappeared in an instant, to her great relief.

It was now nine o'clock.

John ran home and burst into the little study where Doctor Melden sat waiting for him before the fire.

"The slave hunters—the slave hunters—they have stolen him away! My knife, where is it, do you hear? my knife, my knife!"

"No, my boy, you do not need a knife—pray eat some supper and we will talk of what is best to do."

"Talk of what is best to do? why should we?—I know what is best to do. I will overtake these men—we have paid for the boy—a receipt for the money will be here to-morrow! I shall follow them to the brink of hell! And so you will not give me my knife—very well, I'll go without it!"

"Come back, come back here, John—John Brown!"

The old man was out in the yard and the wild wind was tossing his white hair in mocking derision.

"John—John Brown!"

But there was for answer only the smothered shriek of the gale through the pines, and the soft, purring, menacing hiss of the racing snow.

CHAPTER XXI

A FRUITLESS CHASE

IT was a forlorn hope to overtake that sleigh: a wild, foolish, undefined hope.

Age takes time to consider, but youth acts. John had

followed the snow path for several miles, and although the track was partially obscured by the drift, he could still make it out. But the soft snow slipped beneath his feet and his progress became slower and slower. From six miles an hour his gait slackened to barely three.

The night was dark, and the air was full of sleet and flying flakes. Angry scudding clouds chased each other athwart the sky, but now and again for an instant there could be seen rifts where the moon shone through. Then the gloom would seem to lift, only to give way again to the murkiness of the winter night.

The boy's legs were getting heavy and as his footsteps became slow, his senses came back. After all, what could he do, even if he should overtake the men in the sleigh? He could not successfully fight them and rescue their prisoner!

Still, Jim Slivers was his property. Dr. Melden's money had bought him: these men had no moral or legal right to the boy. Grant that he was a negro—admit that he was a slave: he was the property of John Brown.

Thrice armed with the consciousness of right, he sprang forward, determined that if he could catch these slave stealers he would cling to them and detain them until he could prove his position.

The black clouds parted and the landscape seemed to lighten. Over to the right was a brown spot that marked a farmhouse; no light was seen—all were sleeping soundly. On closer approach the dull reflection of smoldering coals in the fire-place could be made out against the little windows. Joined to the house by a long open woodshed was the barn. John approached and looked in at the window. All was quiet. He moved along back to the barn and tried the door: it was locked. To one side was a sliding window used for throwing out

compost. At a gentle push this gave way, and a horse within answered with a neigh.

John crawled in through the window and felt his way back to the door, which was held by a hook. This he unfastened and the wooden hinges creaked ominously as a flood of soft light came in, followed by a gust of snow.

The boy could see the animals in the stalls, and he felt along the backs of each: two cows, then a colt that snorted and squirmed under his touch, next came a horse that made no motion and showed by his manner that he had arrived at years of discretion.

Behind the horse was a tangle of harness on a wooden peg. John felt for a bridle, picked it out, took a blanket that hung near and led the horse out into the night, closed the barn door and vaulted onto the animal's back.

The horse's hoofs made not the slightest sound in the soft snow as he moved on a trot out into the roadway and headed for the south.

Was this young man so devoid of all moral instinct as to steal a horse? Bless you, do not be captious—he did not commit larceny. He borrowed the horse only for an hour or so—it would be safely back in its stall in the morning at farthest. A horse is power—hands and feet—an annihilator of space. A horse means safety to the oppressed—liberty to the threatened. In times of emergency a horse belongs to him who can mount it first. Attacked by Indians, do you ask who holds a bill of sale of this beast, ere you place foot in stirrup?

The old farm horse snorted at the spurring heels and swung into a lunging gallop that meant ten miles an hour.

Only two faint velvety furrows marked the road now: the elements were in conspiracy with the enemy.

In an hour a teamster was met, his jingling bells echoing on the frosty air.

" Did you pass a pung ? " called John.

" Three men in it ? "

" Yes. "

" Driving as if the devil was after 'em ? "

" Yes. "

" Well, I should say I did—nothing wrong, I hope! "

" No—how far back ? "

" Oh, ten miles—who were they and who are you in such a rush ? "

But John made no answer; he sent his horse forward on a run. It was getting towards morning. The cocks were crowing, and now and again twinkling lights could be seen in farmhouses.

At one of these a man was going out to the barn with a lantern in one hand and a basket in the other.

" Did you see three men go by in a sleigh ? "

" How could I, when I just got out of bed! "

" Well, how far is it to New Haven ? "

" Twenty-five thousand miles the way you are going—if you right about face and take the left hand turn at the village eight miles back, it 's twelve miles. "

John had missed the main track. Eight miles out of the way—sixteen miles of travel for naught! He was stiff, sore and benumbed with cold. But back he turned and the honest old horse responded to his urging.

Just at daylight New Haven was reached. The wind had died down, and just before the stars disappeared they shone out in a clear sky a brief space, just as sanity comes to a dying man. Curling blue smoke arose from many houses. In a doorway between two warehouses stood a watchman in a big muffled overcoat. In his hand he held a stout knotted cane.

" Are you a policeman ? " called John.

" That 's what they call me! "

" Did you see three men in a sleigh come into town ? "

" I might ha' seen a dozen sleighs come in town—who do you want ? "

" Two men who were stealing a slave. "

" Oh, there were two or'f'cers with a runaway just drove down to the dock to take the New York boat ! "

" Which way—quick, tell me which way ! "

" Don't get in a sweat, youngster—they did n't steal the boy, they had a warrant for him signed by the Gov'ner. But that 's the way to Long Wharf ! "

John turned and looked in the direction the man pointed. The loud exhaust of a side-wheel steamer was heard, and then the boat herself showed between the buildings.

The steamer was a full half-mile away, plowing through the broken ice and headed down the Sound.

" You see," said the watchman, " that 'ere boat should 'a' left las' night, but there was too much gale, so she layed up till daylight. The gentlemen you speak of are aboard of 'er. "

CHAPTER XXII

SLAVE-STEALING AND HORSE-STEALING

THE question of slavery was a vexed one at this time in New England States. The real fact was, slaves were a poor investment, for only where they could be worked in gangs could they be made to pay.

Cotton and an enervating climate demanded slaves, so cotton's conscience was not affected by the ethics of the case. For let us admit that conscience and self-interest are never very widely separated.

For the most part, though, the New England conscience on the slave question was apathetic. Yet only a

year before there came near being a division in the Presbyterian Church at Plainfield on the question. Not on the general issue—of course not—no one was interested enough for that—but rather on personal grounds.

A Virginian had moved to Plainfield and brought several slaves with him. By the law of the State they were then free, for there was an act forbidding the importation of slaves into Connecticut. However, our Virginian did not like the climate and proposed moving back to Dixie. At the eleventh hour his slaves claimed their freedom and refused to go. He threatened. They appealed to the townspeople for protection. He being a member of the church, in good standing, appealed to the brethren, and argued eloquently on the rights of property. He had bought the slaves; he had paid for them; he had always treated them well; he proposed to compel them to go with him, just as he could compel his children to accompany him.

The slaves were intelligent mulattoes, and Christians, the same as their master. They agreed to leave it to a vote of the church, for many disputes in those days were decided by the church instead of by the courts.

Doctor Melden made a strong plea for the slaves. He viewed them simply as men, and he applied the Golden Rule to the case. As for himself, he did not care to become the chattel of any man, no matter how Christian; therefore he wished to give freedom to others.

A few of Dr. Melden's personal friends stood by him, but the majority went with the pastor of the church; and on putting the matter to a vote, it was decided that the slaves should accompany their master; and they did.

And now it was the talk of the whole town that Doctor Melden had not only argued for abolition, but was actually engaged in the business of running off slaves: for he

thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. But in fact there was no defense: James Golden, alias Jim Slivers, was a runaway slave; officers had come with full authority to take him back. This slave had been harbored by Doctor Melden. Moreover, Doctor Melden had protected a young renegade who called himself John Brown.

This young Brown had stolen a horse and disappeared. Leastwise the horse was gone, and Brown was gone; and a teamster had seen a boy that looked like Brown with a horse that looked like the one missing.

Old Doctor Melden had been harboring both Brown and the runaway negro. How sad that a man of his age, so venerable, so universally respected, should sink to such depths!

Old Doctor Melden made no excuse, for there was no excuse to make. Possibly he was troubled by these rumors; for a committee had come to him from the church to reason and pray with him. They assured him that they bore him no malice and would forgive him even if he sinned to seventy times seven: that is, provided he was repentant.

But he was not repentant: he even asked them to cease praying for him: said that he wished to leave the matter to God who judgeth in secret.

The committee went away sorrowful, but being charitable people, they reported that Old Doctor Melden was fast sinking into the hopeless irritability and senility of second childhood. Someone sent a copy of the report to the Doctor by mail.

Of course we cannot say he was done to death by slanderous tongues; this would be too harsh; and although no disease preyed upon his vitals, death claimed him.

One morning, just a fortnight after the disappearance

of John Brown, Mrs. McBride entered the little study at daylight as was her custom. Sitting at the table, with his white-crowned head bowed, and resting on the open Bible, was the stiffened form of the old man.

Death had come to him while in the act of devotion—his spirit had flown on the wings of prayer.

CHAPTER XXIII

DEFEAT AND DOUBT BUT NOT DISCOURAGEMENT

TWO thoughts kept racking the brain of John Brown during all that chilling night ride; and sunrise shed no new light upon them.

He felt that he must rescue Jim; to abandon him now to fate would be the basest kind of poltroonery. Perhaps he did not think out this sentiment to its limit, for the idea of rescue was supreme: the thought of giving up the chase never entered his mind.

The second thought, which was the more vital, as it enveloped the other completely, was the rescue of Margaret Silverton. The five hundred dollars sent to purchase freedom for Jim was meant to give liberty to Margaret. And yet this sacrifice on the part of Doctor Melden, so far as John knew, had benefited neither.

Could it be possible that this angelic young woman had received the money and yet made no acknowledgment of it? Stories that he had heard concerning the duplicity of woman-kind came stealing into the boy's mind; he shuddered and thrust them back as though they were pollution.

Yet, after all, how did these slave hunters get track of the runaway—had Margaret told them? It could not

be, and the slave having been paid for, why follow him? Surely, if Margaret had incautiously revealed his whereabouts, she also would have told the fact of the purchase: and this being true, there would be no excuse for the capture. Then how did the slave hunters get on the track of the boy?

He had gone over the matter a hundred times, as his eyes followed the disappearing steamboat.

"Have you come far?"

The watchman's voice awoke the lad: he started.

"Yes—that is, not very."

"Your horse is pretty well blowed."

"Yes, he's a little tired—where can I put him up?"

"Just around the corner is the tavern barn."

The horse was brown when in his natural color: now he was white, for sweat and steaming breath had frozen over him like a blanket.

John headed the horse around the corner, dismounted, and shoved back the big sliding door of the barn. There on the floor stood a horse white as the one he led, coated with frozen foam like his own. A hostler was industriously rubbing the animal with a woolen cloth.

"Shut that door, jackanapes, this horse will catch his death o' cold!"

"He's got it now," answered John.

"They gave him a devil of a drive, for sure!"

"Who were they?"

"Constables, I guess—they hired the rig o' us, an' gave me a dollar extra to keep this horse from goin' to horse-heaven!"

"Where are the men now?"

"On the steamboat—hold on, aint you goin' to put yer horse in?"

"No, not this time, thank you."

John backed the horse out, pushed the big door to, mounted and rode on a jog trot out the main street that led straight toward the west.

He had entered the barn with the intention of having the horse fed and properly cared for. He could smell the aroma of coffee, ham and eggs and fried potatoes coming from the tavern kitchen; he was faint from hunger, for he had missed his supper the night before: why did he not remain for breakfast? Simply because the truth came to him that he had not a cent of money in his pocket.

His cheeks burned with fever, yet his hands and feet seemed frozen stiff with cold. He tried to pucker his lips to whistle, but not a sound could he make.

The horse was very tired and the clogging snow made him stumble. John reeled on his back and clung to his mane for support.

Three miles out of town he stopped at a farmhouse. His rap at the kitchen door was answered by a motherly old woman.

"Missus, I 'm hungry, and I have no money to pay you. Will you give me some breakfast?"

The woman smiled, asked the boy in, and explained that the breakfast things had all been put away, but of course she would give him something to eat. Then noticing his horse standing at the door, she directed him to put the animal in the barn. John led the horse to the barn, and after giving it water, oats and hay, returned to the house.

A simple lunch was set on the table for him. He drew up a chair, sat down and started to eat. But his fast had been too long and Nature's craving for her needs had vanished. He tried to eat, but the food choked him—he cast a despairing look on the kind woman who sat

near—the room seemed to swim, and had not the motherly arms caught him, he would have fallen.

The next he knew he was lying on a lounge and under his head was a pillow that gave out a pungent odor of pine needles.

He had a guilty feeling that he had been calling for someone; and he gradually made out the fact that there were two persons in the room with him: Margaret Silverton and his Uncle Melden. Soon his blurred vision grew stronger and he discovered that the man and woman were simply two plain old people—strangers. The woman's face looked familiar to him—where had he seen her? She had placed a wet towel on his forehead and was now rubbing his hands; the man had taken off the boy's shoes and was wrapping his feet in a woollen shawl that had evidently been warmed by the stove.

"You feel better now—try to drink some of this tea!"

The voice brought back his scattered senses and he now remembered where he was. How long had he been here? a week maybe—certainly since yesterday.

"Have I been sick long—when did I come here?"

"Oh, about ten minutes ago. You fainted and I called my husband from the woodshed and we got you on this lounge. Now drink this tea, please!"

In the corner a tall wooden clock solemnly ticked off the seconds. The hands marked twenty minutes of nine. In ten minutes' time his soul had traversed the earth, fought battles, rescued Jim Slivers, brought Margaret Silverton to Plainfield—then he had grown weary and lain down on the lounge in Doctor Melden's little study and Margaret had come and placed a damp cloth over his forehead and was now caressing his hands.

But all at once his dreams were dashed to fragments—he was among strangers—he had no money—he was ill

and his doubts and difficulties were all before him. Realizing these things, his native imperturbability came over him. He sat up, drank the tea, and then ate a piece of bread.

"I 'll sleep for a little while, if you don't mind," he said.

"That 's right, lie down and rest—you must stay here until you feel all right," said the old man.

The woman adjusted the pillow under his head, the man covered him with a blanket and they withdrew to the kitchen.

John cast his eyes around the little room, and he saw that it was plainly furnished. He tried to weave a history for this funny old couple; they had had a big family of children who were all grown up, got married and moved away; he noticed that the old man was slightly hump-backed, and that the woman wore brass-rimmed spectacles and had a mole on her cheek.

The tea-kettle hummed cheerily in the next room, and above the tones of the singing kettle, he caught the voices of the man and his wife. They were doing for him what he had done for them, *i. e.*, weaving a history.

"He has come a long way—his horse is tired out!"

"I 'm afraid he run away."

"Perhaps he was abused!"

"It would be an awful wicked person who would wrong him. He 's a fine, honest young fellow—he told me at once that he had no money."

"But surely there is some secret back of it—he has ridden all night and I fear his feet are frozen."

"I hope he is not a criminal!"

"Never mind, we will not question him!"

"Not a word—it is none of our business—we will just take care of him, that 's all."

The voices sank to a monotonous, gentle ripple that chimed with the sound of the singing kettle, and John sailed slowly away to the land of dreams.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOT HOPES FADE OFF INTO MIST

WHEN John awoke it was noon and the table was set in the little kitchen for three.

He hobbled out and made a show of eating. At once, after dinner, the boy proposed to be off on his journey. But he found that although when sitting still, he was comfortable, yet when he moved, there was pain in every joint of his body. Besides that, one foot had been nipped by frost and it was so swollen he could hardly get on his shoe. So he allowed the counsel of his friends to prevail and decided to wait until morning.

In his resolution concerning what was best to do, there was no waver, neither shadow of turning. Go back to Plainfield? He had not considered it. Sometime, of course, he would return, but now duty lay elsewhere. And let us not forget that down deep under all of our unconscious sophistry, duty lies in the direction of desire: we succumb to the strongest attraction.

That the slave hunters would take their prisoner straight back to Zanesville he never doubted. From New York they would go by stage to Philadelphia, thence to Pittsburg, then on to Zanesville. They would go at the rate of at least sixty miles a day, and if they did not mind traveling by night, with consequent loss of sleep, they might even go faster. The stages changed horses every few miles, while his one poor old horse must make the journey through.

He had started and he would make the trip; he would rescue Jim Slivers, and he would help Margaret and her mother to move straight to Plainfield. Margaret desired to do this, Doctor Melden approved the plan—it must be carried out. Otherwise, slavery would be the fate of Jim and a condition worse than death the lot of Margaret. John rose to the level of events.

But he was stealing a horse!—not stealing, appropriating. To take what the exigencies of the case demand is not theft. If a man is starving, the law against larceny is in abeyance. Jesus plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath day, thus breaking two laws, a quibbler might say. But man is greater than law and ever will be, for the satisfaction of man's wants is God's will. Thus did the boy silence conscience.

Faulty reasoning, does someone say? No; the prosperity of all Christian nations is founded on the law of conquest, that is, the taking from others the things that are needed, and in times of war certain commandments are always waived.

The decalogue applies only to piping times of peace, for that bit of portable wisdom, "All 's fair in love and war," is firmly rooted in the hearts of humanity.

Soon after breakfast the little hump-backed man shook John's hand, and the good old lady kissed him on the cheek, and he rode away. John knew human nature well enough to be convinced that he could travel without money. Foolish people do not know that a man can do the same even now, if he is only frank and honest. The simple statement that one is hungry and penniless will ever touch the heart of a live man and more especially woman. We turn the beggar away only because we believe him unworthy. But if he carried in his countenance the mark of innocence and the purity of youth,

we would not only give him our coat but our cloak also.

John timed his requests for food at meal-time, always making the frank explanation that he had no money.

The answer usually was, "That 's all right, help yourself!" And so he was fed and lodged and speeded on his way.

With ferry and toll-gate keepers it was not quite so easy; but the statement made, without stopping, that he "would pay on the way back" was usually sufficient. Others, being satisfied that he had no money, allowed him to pass, and in several cases onlookers produced the change for him. And the tall, straight, manly, serious youth won the shy sympathy of the young women, the half pity of the older ones, and the confidence of the men.

In spite of drifts and cold storms, thirty miles or more were turned off each day. Often for long distances he would get chances to ride in wagons or sleighs. Then he would lead the horse behind and this would rest them both. New York was reached in three days; Philadelphia in three days more; then came a monotonous stretch of fourteen days to Pittsburg, and at sun-down on the twenty-third day after leaving New Haven he stopped for supper at a farmhouse, in front of which was a pointing arrow on a sign board, and the token: *8 M. to Zanesville.*

It was his intention to ride straight on after supper, but the drizzling rain that had fallen all day now turned to snow. The night was dark and the old horse without shoes could make but slow headway over the stony road. The young man's intention was to find Margaret Silver-ton the first thing; but, as she did not know of his coming, it seemed better that they should meet in the daytime. And in truth, now that the whole grievous journey

through cold, and rain, and dark, over mountains, across wild streams and past wilder woods, was over, he hesitated at meeting this beautiful girl. What should he say? What would she say?

He ate little supper and the farmer's wife asked him if he was ill. He sat by the big fire-place and his teeth chattered as if he had a chill. The woman insisted on giving him a dose of pepper tea, and on his soaking his feet in mustard water; and when he started up and declared his intention of going on to Zanesville at once, the good man and his wife looked at each other knowingly, and thought their visitor daft.

His sleep that night was a wild, tossing delirium. He ate little breakfast and, when he started away, he even forgot to thank his kind entertainers.

In a half hour he saw the rising smoke from the city of Zanesville. Soon the church spires came in sight; in a half hour more he looked down the straight rows of streets with their prim rows of houses. He stopped his horse at the top of the hill to get his bearings. It was n't the great city that he had once known; it seemed to have contracted itself into a mere village.

His eye ran around the rim of hills, and off to the north he saw the winding road that led to Hudson—the same beaten track that his feet first traversed when he had come here with his father's cattle. He remembered well how, on his second visit, he had stood on yonder hill and picked out Silverside. Why, yes, it must be that Silverside was near where he then stood. He cast his eye about on the houses near at hand.

Just below, not a hundred yards from him, was a large, newly-painted house. He rubbed his eyes. Surely, yes, it must be Silverside. The cattle pens were all removed, the big barn had been weather-boarded, and the

“quarters” in the rear had been torn down and carted away. What a change in less than a year! and yet it was all for the better; but still John had hoped for a sight of the stately residence, just as it was when he first knew it. He had an affection for the old place, that before he had never guessed. But now it was all so spick-span new; so clean and fresh and modern—and uncomfortable, like a hard-boiled shirt.

An idea came to the youth; he would enquire here about Mrs. Silverton and her daughter—surely, these people would be able to direct him to their present abode! Then the place had a fascination for him, it lured him on and he wanted once more to stand on that veranda and lean against that same pillar that he had slid down at midnight, and against which a fair-haired girl in blue had leaned and waved him a good-bye.

He rode in at the gate, straight up to the front steps, he dismounted and tied his horse to a ring in the horse block.

He walked up on the veranda and touched the favorite pillar, “lest offense be given”; then he rang the bell. It seemed a good while before anyone answered, and he was on the point of ringing again when a colored girl came to the door.

John started to ask her where Mrs. Silverton now lived, but the idea came to him that he would rather ask his questions of a more intelligent person: besides that, he had a little curiosity to see the new owner of Silver-side.

“Good-morning—I wished to ask—to see the gentleman who lives here.”

“I ’ll tell him, sah, but then it am only eight o’clock. I ’m afraid he is not up. Will the Missus do?”

“Yes, the Missus will do.”

“Step right in dah, sah, an’ I ’ll call her.”

The little room that he stepped into was just on the left of the hallway. It was a reception or waiting room not more than ten feet square. John noticed the lace curtains, the rich carpet, the sofa across the corner and the dainty little writing desk. It was such a cozy little room!

And yet it lacked something; yes, it was cold. The dead ashes in the little fire-place neutralized all the beauty; he did not sit down, but stood hat in hand, looking out through the lace curtains and picturing Margaret's plain poverty with a cheerful fire, to this sumptuous apartment with its dead ashes on the hearth. Ugh! nothing else is so dead as a fire gone out!

A gentle swish of skirts—a faint odor of violets—he turned, and on the threshold stood a slender, stately woman. A woman of thirty, perhaps, wearing a loose flowing, trailing robe. Blue—light blue, the color was; this dress was caught low at the neck by a clasp of two golden hearts, and at the waist was a girdle that fell to one side and revealed a suggestion of the graceful hip.

She stood in the doorway like an apparition of light. At a glance John saw from peeping slippered toe to golden crown of fluffy hair. The hat dropped from his hand; he tried to move, to speak; but he stood as one transfixed.

The woman hesitated, as if about to flee; she leaned against the casing for support; then she entered the room at one long step and closed the door behind. An instant she stood, wringing her hands, and then her arms were about the boy's neck. She buried her face on his shoulder and sobbed: "John Brown, my brave John Brown, my brave John Brown!"

His arms were about her, and she drew him backward until they stood against the closed door.

“ Don’t cry so, Margaret—I ’m here—tell me what to do for you.”

But the only answer she gave was “ John Brown, my brave John Brown!” as her frame shook with deep wild sobs. She clutched him in a frantic embrace—her fingers entwining, now behind his neck and then his waist. Then these fingers stole through his hair: her hands touched his face; she pressed her cheek against his, and their lips met in one long, clinging kiss. She kissed his forehead, his eyes, his lips, his chin, his neck, and then her face fell pillowed on his breast. His cheeks burned fire and his frame was torn by curious pain—the exquisite torture of delirium. Never, never had he guessed, or even faintly imagined what the unrestrained passion of a woman might be. But what could all this torrent mean?

There was a lull in the storm as her face pressed his bosom and the perfume of her hair filled his nostrils. “ Tell me, Margaret—you answered my letter—did n’t you—tell me yes.”

“ No, I did not answer it.”

He could feel the quiver of her warm flesh in his embrace, and he felt the pain that he knew the words caused her.

“ And the money to make Jim free—you received that safely, did n’t you ?”

“ My brothers took it the day it came—they went away with it!”

“ Where did they go ?”

“ Straight to Plainfield to steal the boy—how could I stop them—how could I notify you! They stole him and sent him south.”

“ And you were left without money ?”

“ Yes, I was starved into marrying Captain Brydges.”

“ And so you are married ?”

“ Yes.”

“ And is hunger so hard to endure—you forgot the hunger of the heart ? ”

“ Yes, but I know it now, mother was ill—oh, why did you not come a month ago—my John Brown—my brave John Brown! I married him, John, I married that old man a month ago! ”

The woman’s sobs shook both as she stood there, with her back to the door.

The passion crept from the young man’s heart, and he tried to free himself from her grasp. She clung closer and began kissing him again—he turned his head to avoid her and his glance fell on the bleak fire-place.

“ My heart is like those dead ashes,” he moaned.

“ My husband is sleeping upstairs—he will be down soon—you must go, you must go. Come for me to-night and I will go with you, we will live anywhere—in the woods—I can work, see these hands, I can work! ”

She stripped the rings from her fingers and threw them on the floor; she held up her two white delicate hands.

“ Promise me that you will be back to-night for me—at midnight! ”

“ I have no money—I could not care for you a day.”

From her bosom she took a silken purse and forced it into his hands. Still she stood, back to the door. He tried to push past her—she barred the way: “ Promise to come for me to-night! ”

“ No, no, no, it cannot be! ”

“ You think I am forward—but how would you know if I did not tell you? There is no time for coquetry—besides, I ’m honest, you must know my love! ”

“ Ah! but you are married—your husband is now under this roof.”

“ My legal husband—yes, but you are my husband before God! I love you, will you not understand ? ”

“ But marriage—is it not sacred ? ”

“ Nothing but love is sacred. A month ago I was married—legal marriage may be pollution—no, when I last saw you, I could not have spoken thus. But I have lived in hell—promise me—to-night at midnight ! ”

“ Were you not the wife of another, yes ; as it is, no. ”

She reached out her arms in supplication, and fell forward clasping his knees. He picked her up, and half carried the limp form to the little sofa, and laid it gently down ; dropped the purse on the writing desk ; turned quickly and passed out into the hall, out of the front door, down the steps.

He untied his horse, mounted and rode slowly down the hill.

CHAPTER XXV

MUCH EFFORT WITH NOTHING BUT EXPERIENCE AS A NET RESULT

ZANESVILLE held nothing but horror now for young Brown. It seemed as though the place was pestilence-ridden ; he hastened away, casting frightened looks behind. Had he been born in France this might not have been, but generation after generation of Puritan ancestry had bred in his mind very sturdy ideas of right and wrong.

We have seen that the Puritan has a flexible conscience in matters of property—that in times of revolution the Law of Moses is suspended, and following the personal example of Moses, even life might be taken. But Puritanism does not reckon on an insurrection of the heart ; hence the scarlet letter.

When John Brown arrived in Hudson after four days' journeying, he was greeted with the greeting that was the Prodigal Son's. His father kissed him, something that had not happened since his babyhood. Nothing was too good for him; he was told to sit in the big rocking chair, others took care of his horse, neighbors were called in and there was merry feasting.

When we get home after a journey we look about at all the little furnishings to see what changes have taken place; everything interests us.

In the warmth of the home-getting John noticed a black-bordered card protruding from the lids of the family Bible. He took it out and read: *Died, suddenly, Doctor Silas Melden, at Plainfield, Connecticut, Feb. 3d, 1818.* Then followed a set of eulogistic resolutions that had been adopted by the Hartford Presbytery, and signed by the pastor of the church at Plainfield as secretary.

John put the card back, making no sign. He inwardly computed that Doctor Melden had died just two weeks after he had left. He was not surprised nor shocked, for his heart had reached that stage which comes to every living mortal, be it early or be it late, when no earthly event can agitate.

"We only got that card yesterday," said Deacon Brown, "only yesterday—I s'pose you sent it—was it a glorious death-bed? We thought you would be back—hardly so soon though! Has n't he grown, though, Ruth."

Yes, Ruth was sure he had grown. And he had changed, changed more than she dared mention. When she heard that he was at his father's house, she put a shawl over her head and ran over with little Rachel tagging behind. But when Ruth saw the boy's face she

was shocked. Instead of kissing him she only put out her hand. She hesitated, and embarrassment covered her handsome face. A wondrous change had come over her blithe lad—some awful sorrow had touched him—like an apple too much loved of the sun, he was ready to drop. His face was seamed, dark lines were under his eyes, and the marks of deep feeling were upon him.

No one saw this but Ruth—her subtle intuition and delicate womanly perception, untrammelled by much child-bearing, gave her an insight that the other women of her age who stood about did not possess. They thought him merely tired from his long ride; but Ruth knew there was tragedy behind it all, for boys do not turn into men in a year, nor girls into women, unless by chance they are placed in the fires of experience. But to little Rachel, pretty, petite and joyous little Rachel, he was the same John Brown. She sat on his knee and ran her hands through his coarse hair and made fun of his clothes, and asked him if it was so, that he was to preach in their church next Sunday.

And John smiled, a smile that tore Ruth's heart, but all the rest laughed at Rachel's little joke, and all were very merry; for brave, manly John Brown had come back to Hudson and was going to stay.

"His eyes troubled him—how can such as he, used to being out of doors, read books all the time! I tell you 't aint nature—he 's come back here to help me."

The thrifty Squire was delighted to get the boy back. Really, he needed him and now that he was here all things should be made pleasant for him—he would himself make all explanations. And so the Squire repeated the tale about inflammation of the eyes, and the death of Doctor Melden, and incidentally hinted at the depths of book knowledge that John had acquired: always

winding up by the announcement that the boy was going to stay and take care of his father's tannery business. Evening came and John proposed going over to Ruth's to his own little room in the attic. His father pulled him by the sleeve and whispered :

" No, John, you can't."

" Can't do what ? "

" Stay at Ruth's ! "

" Why not, pray ? "

" You are too old, don't you know—too big."

John was mystified. But he did as his father requested and packed himself away with a whole half dozen little boy Browns that slept in two beds in a little side room.

There was a goodly lot of these Browns, sisters and brothers, half-sisters, half-brothers, step-brothers, and step-sisters. It is not necessary that we should inventory them here, for they have little to do with our narrative. They were strong, healthy, quarreling youngsters; cross in the morning, busy all day, tired at night. They had mumps and measles and chicken-pox, stone bruises on their feet in spring, bee stings in summer, sore throat in the fall, chilblains in the winter, and ague between times.

Up in the little village grave-yard there was a row of mounds in varying lengths, all marked Brown, but the name did not die. And whether the fittest survived is not for us to answer, but a goodly half score grew to maturity and lived out honorable lives of useful labor. They ate and worked and slept; they were married and given in marriage; they lived and died, and their good deeds live after them. We leave these sisters and brothers for the statistician to group, for the moralist to speculate upon, and for the economist to figure over. Shakespeare's seven brothers and sisters interest us but little! so we turn the page and give our attention once

more to the only one of the Browns who departed from the common type.

Squire Owen Brown's tannery was not a very great affair, excepting in the eyes of Hudsonites. It supplied leather to various cobblers in the neighborhood, and rumor had it that one shoemaker had come fifty miles for a side of Brown's sole leather. Then there was trapping going on all the time among the farmers' boys, and skins had to be tanned to make caps and mittens, and even overcoats; for the spinning wheel and loom had not quite driven buckskin out of fashion.

Skill, industry and good judgment were required in the tanning business, and John had all three. "This one thing I do." The young man was sober, grave, dignified; he lived within himself, and sought by hard work to down the sorrow that brooded in his heart.

A letter had been written to Walter Warren of Plainfield, requesting him to forward certain books that Doctor Melden had presented to John. On the fly leaf of each, the young man's name was written in the good old man's large, plain hand.

After several weeks the books came. John had long been anticipating them and planning all by himself how he would read and study and write out his best thoughts.

The books arrived and he eagerly sought out a *Plutarch's Lives* that was in the package. He touched it with trembling fingers and then put it down. He tried to read, but the heroes were all so very far, far away; he doubted whether they had ever really lived. He closed the book, and tied it up in a piece of blue cloth that he had surreptitiously bought at the store, and then hid it away.

He tried to read *Æsop's Fables*, and the *Life of Franklin* and *Pilgrim's Progress*, all of which had interested him

greatly, when at Plainfield. But then he read because he was going to tell someone about it, and now there was no one to tell, no one to listen, no one to whom he could write. He tried reading aloud to Ruth and Rachel. The Widow Crosby had the brightest mind of any woman in the village, but books had been denied her, and intellectual companionship she had never known. She listened and encouraged the boy to read, but there was no glow in her listening—no sighs of feeling or smothered exclamations of pleasure. She listened because John wished her to, that was all.

And, as for little Rachel, she would leave her chair after five minutes and go sit on John's knee. She would take the book from his hand to look at the pictures, and then ask him to "tell a story instead of reading from the ugly book that sounded just like a sermon."

And so he would tell a story, and as he told, Rachel would gently pull his ears, or comb his hair, parting it first on one side, then on the other, then in the middle, and call on her mother to look at his changed appearance.

"Rachel, you are too forward—don't you know that you are a young lady?" said her mother severely after one more than usually hilarious frolic.

"Of course I 'm a young lady and John is my big brother, ar' n't you, John?"

"Of course."

"No, he is not—you must be more dignified."

"So I must."

And the girl went over and placed her arms about "her big brother's" neck and pressed her cheek to his and laughed aloud, and shook her brown curls in innocent glee.

"You grieve me Rachel—a girl of your age acting so—go to bed at once!"

Rachel whimpered a little and after being told three times, climbed the ladder into the garret and in ten minutes the rhythmic sound of long breaths told that she was fast asleep.

“Don’t go, John,” said Ruth, with a sudden determination, “don’t go—stay and tell me what it is—you will feel better.”

“Tell you what, Ruth?”

“What it is that is troubling you. Some great sorrow has come to you. Boys of eighteen should not have dark lines beneath their eyes, and be so restless and miserable as you are—tell me what it is! Perhaps I can help you.”

“Oh, it is nothing.”

“No, something happened to you—you met someone when you were away.”

“Yes, I did!”

The young man sat down, and Ruth laid aside her knitting, and her big, open, kindly eyes looked into his and invited the confession which every good woman knows is good for the soul.

And John Brown told his tale of love, omitting nothing save that scene in the little reception room. This he had no right to breathe—no one could understand but God. He merely said that when he reached Zanesville he found Margaret Silverton married to an old man; that she was unhappy, and that, fearing he might do that which he ought not to, he hurried away, and came straight to Hudson.

“And you did just right, John. When a woman marries it is for better or worse. She must make the best of it.”

“But Margaret is so miserable—I dream of her unhappiness every night—it seems as if I must go and see her.”

"Never, never, John; you must put her out of your mind. When she married another, she forsook you."

"But suppose she is sorry and desires me to come to her?"

"If she is a good woman she cannot wish now to see you!"

"Do you think so?"

"I surely do. Besides that, you are young—there is no haste—you must save your heart, save your heart for—for Rachel."

The woman smiled, reached over and took both his hands in hers.

"For whom?"

"Why, for Rachel; it has been the dream of my life ever since she was born, aye, and before."

John withdrew his hands from hers, stood up, passed his hands across his forehead and after an instant said:

"But Rachel—Rachel is a child—she is my sister."

"She is nearly fourteen—she is a woman, in fact, but does not know it—yet you are but children in one sense—if you marry in four or five years, it will be time enough. Tell me now, John, you will forget that married woman; it is wicked for you to think of her. Fix your heart on Rachel, just see how she loves you!"

"Yes, yes, she does love me."

John said a hurried good-night and hastened away.

Once out in the night air, he tried to get hold of the situation. He thought of how, only an hour before, this innocent, rollicking little girl, who knew nothing of life or its responsibilities, had sat on his knee and pressed her cheek to his, of how she had stroked his hair and clasped his face in her hands. In it all there was not the slightest trace of passion; she was a child and these things gave him no thrill. He thought of the quivering touch of

Margaret, and the delirious, delicious effect of her warm kisses, and the idea of a marriage with this thoughtless child stood out before him as a crime.

His wild, restless spirit said, "Flee this unhappy situation—go back and claim Margaret at once. She is miserable. Together you will be happy. Do this and you escape the wrong that you may inflict on this child by staying here."

He went to the barn and felt his way into the stall where the brown horse stood quietly eating hay. He reached for the saddle on the well-known peg; he put the saddle on the horse and drew the girth tight; the halter was slipped off and the bridle rein over the horse's head—

"Is that you, John?"

It was his father's voice.

"Yes."

"You're out late—been for a ride? The baby's got croup, I'm 'fraid—here, I'll take the saddle off for you, just run over and tell the Widow Crosby that your mother wants her to come over right away!"

CHAPTER XXVI

IN THE GRASP OF FATE

IN the little tannery, business was increasing, and the legend concerning the shoemaker, who came fifty miles for a side of the Brown sole leather, was transformed into a fact. Not only did one shoemaker come a long distance, but several came.

A commission was sent to Walter Warren to call on the farmer who owned the brown horse and enter into an arrangement whereby John could pay for the animal in

semi-yearly installments. The elder Warren, being consulted by his son, took matters into his own hands, paid for the horse, and ordered his son to send "the young horse-thief" the receipted bill of sale for a birthday present.

John accepted the bill of sale without a word of thanks, and in six months when he had saved a hundred dollars, he sent the money to Mr. Warren, firmly declining the present.

Nearly a year had passed since John had returned from Plainfield. He had grown stronger. The burdened, restless mind did not subdue material nature; so hard work, good digestion and sound sleep bore fruit in animal vigor.

He had been a professed Christian, but he now turned to religion with renewed zeal, as men do when earthly ties are severed and hearts are breaking. He sought to find the peace in religion that love had denied.

Sundays he usually took dinner at Ruth's. It had grown into a habit. And during the long, quiet Sabbath afternoons these three would sing and read and talk. At such times the young man's spirit would almost break into flame and the ominous cloud of care that brooded over him would take wing. But soon the thought of Margaret and of the black depths of misery that she was enduring would come surging back.

With Ruth and Rachel his mind led—he had to talk down to them—but with Margaret the position would be reversed. Rachel held him back; but Margaret could lead him on.

Rachel was blossoming into a beautiful young woman. Bright, animated, joyous; innocent of the world and its strife, she seemed the embodiment of bird-like song and simple mirth. No word of serious love had passed be-

tween them, neither had her mother mentioned the subject to the young man since that night he had made his confession. Yet he knew that the mother's ambition was still the same; she loved these children with a high, holy and unselfish love; she knew the worth and the merit of each; she knew, too, the pitfalls into which youth are apt to stumble, and she believed that if they would give to each other the love that each was capable of, all would be secure. Girls must marry! what better then that her daughter should wed this noble young man! If this pure mother-heart lapsed in her logic anywhere, it was in not appreciating the depths of emotion possible in the soul of John Brown. But Ruth reasoned that marriage with Rachel would benefit the boy, as tending to restrain his undefined ambition. And perhaps she was right. To this end she encouraged them to read together, sing duets, and when they went to the woods for berries, Ruth managed to let John and Rachel carry one basket, and to wander away by themselves.

Those were days of early marriages. John had seen all this and he felt that the plan was working: his regard for this charming little creature was taking on a different character. Yet each Sunday night when he would take up his hat to start for home, the girl would hold up her pretty, dimpled face, and in that harmless little peck that passed for a kiss, John knew there was not the slightest passion.

He knew the strength of the mother's will, he knew somewhat of his own force, and he knew that when the question of marriage was presented to Rachel, that the two stronger minds would at once prevail and the blooming little rosebud would not, could not, interpose a single objection to being clipped by cruel shears from the parent stem.

Love gives wisdom, and although John Brown was moving straight forward to his union with this girl, and while there was an attractive side to it all, in his more sober moments he felt there was an inhuman side as well. The young man knew what he was doing; the young woman had no conception of it. She was a blind, passive party to a plan. Fate was pushing her forward, and she in her innocence and ignorance knew not where. But some day there would be an awakening—a rude, cruel awakening. Rachel was capable of love, but John had not awakened her to it; to wed her would be a sin.

Besides all this, when the warmth of young blood ran quiet, John knew that Rachel's spirit did not match his. He had suffered, been disappointed; sorrow and care had come to him in varied forms; he felt deeply. Concerning these things she knew nothing, and could not comprehend should he explain. So all their conversation was quite in the minor key and on trivial topics. He knew down deep in his heart that no man should attach himself for life to a woman who could not sympathize with his every mood. To marry outside of one's mental sphere was to curb and stifle and hold in check one's highest thought. John knew all this, for love of Margaret had made him wise.

Three ways seemed to open before him.

The first and easiest was to drift, and in a year marry Rachel Crosby; he need do scarcely a thing, all would be planned for him. All he had to do would be to hold her in his arms just an instant some Sunday night when she gave him that little parting peck, and kiss her in earnest, right before her mother. Then say a few words and all would be arranged as a matter of course, and he would move over and take up his abode at the Crosby cottage just as he used to—only different.

The second plan was to go straight to Zanesville and claim the woman he loved; claim her in the name of an exalted and all-absorbing passion, and then fight it out with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The third plan was to marry just as nine-tenths of all the men in the world marry; pick the girl that pleases, and provided she seems good-natured and strong and can work and will look up to you, pop the question some moonlight night, and have it over with. If she says yes, all right, and should she say no, don't forget there 's just as good fish in the sea as ever were caught—*fol de rol dol, la la la, la te da!* And as for talk about affinities, it 's all in your eye. People who are willing to cultivate the two bears can get along all right—pish!

But in certain moods it is very easy to dispose of great questions. In the mellow light of evening, for instance as the soft music plays, life and fate present no serious difficulties. On the morrow when we start off to our day's work and alone face the cold realities, things appear different.

The very best friend John Brown had ever known was Ruth Crosby. From his very babyhood her affection had nourished his soul: and his mind could go back to times when in all the big jostling world all seemed to have forgotten him save Ruth.

That he should go contrary to her wishes now seemed the basest of ingratitude. And why should he not love little Rachel? There was not a reason in the world. Rachel was winsome in her dainty beauty, intelligent, honest, happy in disposition and graceful in manner.

John loved her—of course he loved her. But if she would only cease to kiss him, if she would only avoid him so he could woo her! If she would be agitated just a little bit when they met, or if her cheek would color

when he took her hand! But no, she was absolutely unconscious and unrestrained in all of her relations with him; and she still tried experiments in combing his unruly shock of hair.

In the midst of his inward agitations a letter came from Walter Warren. He was coming to Hudson—at last he was coming. His health was not the best, he had been studying too hard, and the doctor had advised a change.

In a week he came, having been duly heralded by John. Of course he would preach to the good people of Hudson on Sunday—all visiting preachers were expected to give the people a taste of their quality. This was an agreeable change for both pastor and people.

Warren was a handsome young fellow, tall, slender and pale. He was used to the ways of polite society, and was quite of a different type from that which the people of Hudson were used to. The men thought him effeminate, but the women did not mind.

After church that first Sunday morning, John and Walter dined at the Widow Crosby's.

For the first time Rachel had lost her free, girlish, unrestrained manner. She was becomingly awkward, and quite blushed and stammered when the Rev. Walter Warren asked her if she liked music. She upset a cup of tea at table, for which she was gently reproved by her mother, and John very ungraciously laughed at the accident, but Walter never saw it.

The next Sunday the young men again dined at Mrs. Crosby's. This time the petite Rachel was not quite so shy. In fact, she and the Rev. Mr. Warren had a nice little conversation on the subject of music, and she explained that she was passionately fond of singing.

Then they sang—did these four—hymns and songs of praise: the quartette was a success. Then they read a

little and talked some more. The young men did not stay late—work in the tannery was pressing and John had to be up betimes. When they took their hats and said good-night, Rachel sidled up to John and put her face up to be kissed, just as had been her custom for years and years. But John noticed that it was not the usual meaningless little peck—the girl's breath was warm and her face suffused. Was this agitation for him? John half doubted it, and a feeling of dislike toward the Rev. Walter Warren came over him. He was sorry he had ever invited him to come to Hudson.

“What a charming little creature she is!” said Walter.

“Who?” asked John.

“Why, Rachel Crosby, of course.”

“Oh!”

“Yes, if she was not yours, I would just up and tumble head over ears in love with her—let me congratulate you, old man! I saw you kiss her—don't deny it—it's all right!”

“If you want to see pretty girls, you will see them at the husking-bee to-morrow night at Farmer Lusk's,” answered John grumpily.

CHAPTER XXVII

A PROPOSAL

“**B**EAR and forbear—that's what!”

The speaker was a fine, buxom, young woman of twenty: strong and healthy and hearty. She had run until she was all out of breath; her cheeks were aglow and the wholesome perspiration was pungent and peculiar to the nostrils of the young man who had just caught her after a hard chase.

It was at the husking-bee at Farmer Lusk's. Twenty women and as many men filled the big barn, and the golden pile of ears was assuming goodly proportions. Behind the busy workers were great piles of stalks.

Overhead the smoky lanterns gave out shadowy gleams and dripping tallow. The cattle in the stalls looked on with big open eyes and chewed their cuds in wondering peace, while the horses gave little snorts of alarm at the wild tumult of talk and clatter of merry tongues.

Suddenly a rustic beauty in linsey-woolsey held up a red ear. She glanced in the direction of a swarthy, tall young man who sat directly opposite, on the other side of the big pile of corn. It was a challenge: both sprang to their feet amid a loud burst of laughter. There was a quick swish of skirts and the nimble girl sprang over the manger—ran past the line of cows, and on out the door. Close behind her footed the young man, cheered on by merry cries from the group of huskers. Twice around the barn they ran, once around the granary, then out by the house and down the road. The snow lay smooth and white, and over all glistened the splendid mid-winter moon.

No woman can outrun a man, even if she wants to.

A hundred yards down the road the young man caught her.

"Let 's not be foolish, John!"

The panting girl gave the red ear of corn a careless toss out into the night.

"That 's so—such silly business is not becoming!"

The girl was not o'er wise, but this time she guessed the mind of her man. She gave him her hand and they started back slowly toward the merry-makers.

They were alone.

"Did you see that Mary Bowers, how she spoke to her

husband—and only married a year—think of it!” said the girl.

“ Well, he was cross to her.”

• “ Bear and forbear, that ’s what ! ”

“ You mean we should always be patient with each other ? ”

“ Of course ; when I get married—that is, if I ever do—I ’ll never say a cross word to my husband ! ”

“ You say, ‘ if you ever get married ’ ? ”

“ Yes, I never expect to marry.”

“ Why not ? ”

“ No one will ever want a poor, ignorant, homely thing like me.”

The words came out with a half whimper as if the girl was about bursting into tears. Both stopped there in the roadway.

“ I want you, Dianthe.”

“ You, John Brown ? ”

“ Yes, Dianthe Lusk, will you be my wife ? ”

“ Why, yes, if mother don’t care, and I know she won’t ! ”

There was a great big resounding smack that might have been heard by the corn huskers over in the barn had they been listening. But they were not listening.

“ And when shall we get married ? ” asked the youth as they walked slowly along, his arm around her ample waist.

“ In six weeks,” said the girl.

“ No, a year from to-night. I will have to build a house ! ”

“ Very well, but aint it funny ? We have n’t ever kept company ! ”

Yet it suddenly came over them that the marriage of a man and woman was not so funny after all.

They approached the barn and took their places among the busy workers—but they did not laugh or joke. Over the growing pile of yellow ears they now and again stole sober glances at each other; sober, serious glances that spoke of subdued joy and anchored hope.

After all the corn had been husked, and the feast in the kitchen was over, and the barn locked and the last laughing merry-maker had departed, Dianthe Lusk told her father and mother of what had occurred.

The next day several neighbors knew of it—in a week, everybody. It was looked upon as a good match, and the Browns and the Lusks being prominent people in the vicinity, of course the event supplied food for much harmless gossip.

But it was quite overshadowed when early the following month, the engagement was announced of the Rev. Walter Warren and Miss Rachel Crosby.

BOOK THREE

CHAPTER I

SO RUNS THE WORLD AWAY—A LETTER

UNTIL yesterday, when a dissecting school of tale-tellers arose, it was the fashion to close the story at the church door. Beyond this the romancer dared not pass. And this is well. In tragedy we take our leave of the hero when he is given over to the undertaker; and in romance, usually, all is over when the priest arrives.

John Brown was married. He built a little house, on a corner of his father's land. His wife was a good house-keeper — active, industrious, honest. She cooked, scrubbed, sewed and on Sunday they went to church. They talked together—did John Brown and his wife—talked of the weather and the crops and the price of wool; of the neighbors, and this one's bonnet and that one's horse. They read the Bible—a chapter a day—beginning at Exodus and going straight through, skipping not a pedigree, omitting nothing.

The dreams and hopes and aspirations of youth were buried deep down in John Brown's heart.

New views of truth no longer opened out to him; high and holy impulses no longer warmed his blood like wine; the sunsets now never brought tears to his eyes from well-springs of undefined emotion—never.

He worked in the tannery from morning until night, six days a week; and on Sundays he wore stiff, uncomfortable clothes and listened to sermons that he accepted

without comment. He was religious. The Jehovah of the Jews to him was God, and the torn and bleeding thorn-crowned Christ meant only a cog in a "scheme" of salvation.

He had "settled down"—or was making a heroic inward struggle to do so. Patient, persistent labor always brings its reward. John Brown was making money; the little house was paid for; he had several hundred dollars to loan; he now owned an interest in the tannery. And then the neighbors respected him, for they had elected him District Surveyor.

Ten years had passed since his marriage. There was a dog's-eared *Plutarch* hidden away in the bottom of an oaken chest. Possibly once a year—at night-time—when there was sickness and he sat up with the stricken ones, he had taken out the book, turned the pages aimlessly, sighed and put the volume back.

John Brown was thirty years of age. His face was seamed, his stiff, straight hair was slightly tinged with gray. The roundness had gone from his wife's face, and the bearing and nursing of six children had taken the lines of beauty from her form. She worked hard, and tended her little flock well, and if she scolded a bit at times, who is there so perfect that he dares blame? Her eyes were hollow, her cheeks yellow, her hands red, caloused and coarse.

So the days passed, and in the thirteenth year of her marriage she died. The neighbor women robed her in her wedding dress. It had been packed away in lavender all these years in the oaken chest with the dog's-eared *Plutarch*. Pillowed on her arm, they placed her baby boy—tired with three days of life. And so they slept.

Five children were left—one had died when four years old—five healthy, hearty, romping children. Their

father was postmaster, farmer, tanner, surveyor, and rich for those days. He could not care for those children any more than he could personally look after his herds. And so he cast about for a wife.

What sort of a wife did he desire? Why, bless your soul, he wanted just such a wife as he had lost! a capable, honest, earnest, Christian woman who could care for the household and keep things in order when he was at home and look after matters when he was away. He was a man of affairs and things must be attended to. A widower with means can take his pick of marriageable women, just as a man with money buys the horse he fancies.

Fathers, mothers and kinsmen all plead his cause and press his suit. What chance has naked little Cupid, shivering in the chill, against such advocates as these!

John Brown cast about for a woman who looked just as Dianthe Lusk did before she had borne seven children.

He found one—Mary Anne Day. He proposed to her father, then her mother, and the subject was broached to Mary herself.

She was willing—nay more—she was pleased.

And right here, let us nail to the barn door of obliquity the pelt of that flaunting falsehood that women sell themselves for a home. According to our peculiar social code a woman marries (or refuses) the man who seeks her hand. She waits for the man to come to her. Nine times out of ten she accepts the first that comes—and the fact that he is willing to make her his wife is proof of his love, and further is sufficient reason why she should love him, and she does. We are not lilies of the field, and there are no ravens that can be relied upon to bring us food. A woman must be clothed and fed, and

what more natural than that she should love the man who promises as much ?

Widower Brown hitched up the mules to a spring wagon and drove over to Farmer Day's, and a preacher was there who married John and Mary. And then the couple drove back to John's house and Mary was mother to the motherless children; the faithful, loyal, patient wife of John Brown.

In this chapter we have treated thirteen years as men measure time. Only one chapter to a heaping dozen years ? Yes, that is all. The historical romance has for its theme the evolution of a soul. Material things are only touched upon as they influence for good or ill.

In crossing the United States there are great stretches of arid space where the sun beats down hot and stifling; where only cacti, sage brush and the dried up beds of streams are seen, and where, over all is the shining alkali dust—aye, and the whitening bones of animals and men. So there are stretches in the life of mortals where the soul travels through arid districts of uneventful time, victim of “arrested development.”

All savages are prey to this law; an Indian at forty knows no more than an Indian at thirty; there is no advancement; the soul stands still. The average man of fifty is no better, no wiser, than he was at forty. John Brown at thirty-two was no nearer to God than he was at twenty—and possibly he had drifted—who knows ?

Three years went by and Mary Anne Day added three sons to the house of Brown.

Brown ruled his family like one of the patriarchs of old. They obeyed without question. He was stern, dignified, sober and withal prosperous and religious. Had he continued to focus his efforts on business, he might have

become very rich and left a fortune to found a theological seminary.

But a letter came to him one day. He received many letters now; but he picked this one out from a half-dozen others and it gave him a thrill—a start. And there flashed over his memory the thought of the first letter that he had ever received. He was ashamed to think that he—John Brown—a man happily married to his second wife, the father of eight fine children—practical, virtuous, sensible, should tremble at the sight of his name written in a certain chirography—pshaw!

He put the letter in a left hand vest pocket and read the others.

That afternoon he rode to his farm four miles out of town. Passing through a grove he reined in, dismounted, sat down on a stump, looked carefully about and took the letter out of his pocket.

He broke the wafers and read:

COVINGTON, KY., June 2, 1835.

JOHN BROWN:

SIR—You have not forgotten me, although you may be surprised to receive this letter. My husband died eight years ago and left me an ample competence. I have one child, a son seventeen years old. He is now in college, but is in full sympathy with my work. I am using my time and money, endeavoring to ameliorate the condition of the slaves and slave owners. For the slave owner is the greatest sufferer from this thing which John Wesley called “the sum of all human villainies.”

Doubtless you will think I am a fanatic and have been moved to act in this matter from a spirit of revenge, and I cannot wholly absolve myself from such a charge.

Slavery teaches the slave owner and his family that labor is degrading and thus it breeds a pride that is akin to vice. My

brothers are gamblers and outcasts, and my father is in a suicide's grave, all through the false idea that men should be owned by other men. And had my brothers been different men, your fate and mine might have been different; but that is all behind. Then that men should traffic in their own children is one of the concomitants of the condition. These things have come close home to me and if you think I feel o'er deeply, pardon me my intemperance and hear me when I say that my years on earth are few and I would leave the earth better than I found it.

When you assisted Jim Slivers to escape, you gave me a hint that has never left me. Of course, the running away of slaves will not in itself break up the institution, but it will cause a fermentation that must make men take sides, and some day this will break into revolution and the end of slavery will come in a day. In the meantime, we are preparing the way.

In a week or less there will arrive at your house by night four blacks, guided by a white man, James Golden by name. This man you knew in your boyhood. For reasons that I need not detail he is dear to me. He is guiding these black men to Conneaut, O., where a small schooner is in waiting to carry them to Canada. You must secrete them and feed them and not start them forward on their perilous journey until they are rested.

Remember I do not encourage slaves to run away except they are to be separated, man from wife, or mother from child. In which case I do what I can.

I have heard of your prosperity and am glad to know that you are happily married.

In this letter I have confided in you entirely, and although I do not know your present attitude on the Negro question, I yet ask you to do that which I have asked in remembrance of what has gone before.

Respectfully Yours,

MARGARET BRYDGES.

CHAPTER II

THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAY

TANNERY, farm, sheep, cattle—all fell into abeyance. This sober, stern-faced man, whom no one had ever accused of possessing a particle of sentiment, suddenly forgot the practical things of earth and was all aflame to do the bidding of a woman—a woman whom he had not seen for years.

Misty rumors had come to him from time to time of the “underground railway,” but he had never believed that there was such a thing in existence. Long years before, in the days of his callow youth, he had accidentally been mixed up in getting a slave away, but the scheme had failed. And it was just as well, for it was only a boyish freak at best.

Of course John Brown had no sympathy with the “peculiar institution”; he believed that it must eventually be done away with; and in a scrap book that he had begun fifteen years before, and which had not since received a new clipping, was this quotation from Jefferson:

The whole commerce between master and man is an exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one hand, and the most degrading submissions on the other. Our children see these things and imitate them. The man must be a prodigy who can contain his morals and manners undepraved under such circumstances. And with what execration should that statesman be loaded who, permitting one half the citizens to trample on the rights of others, transforms these into despots and those into enemies; destroys the morals of the one and the liberty of the other! And can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed their only firm basis—a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God, and that they

cannot be violated without His wrath ? Indeed, I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever; that, considering numbers, nature, and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortunes is among possible events; that it may become probable by supernatural interference. The Almighty has no attribute that can take sides with us in such a contest.

Owen Brown had taught his children by words dropped here and there, that slavery was wrong; and as children are heir to the religious and political opinions of their parents, they all believed that some day the bondsmen would be made free. They believed this just as they believed in the " Resurrection of the body," the coming of " Judgment Day," and the approach of the " Millenium." As to bringing about the Millennium, that was none of their affair—they had other work to do.

John Brown sat there on the stump and read that letter the second time. A wild tumult of emotion swept through his heart. She was alive! She was alive! Not a word had he heard from Margaret for eighteen years. He had mourned her as dead, for how was it possible that such a frail, delicate creature could exist under the conditions that surrounded her when last they met!

She was alive—she had a son—she was living for a purpose!

His own life stretched out into a flat, desert waste. Where now were all his proud possessions ? He, too, had a son, yes, several of them, and daughters as well. He loved them, of course—it was a father's duty to love his children. Two of them had died and over their graves grew a tangle of blackberry bushes and trailing vines.

Margaret's years had doubled since he had seen her. Was her hair still wavy and golden ? Had age touched her lightly and had she in these eighteen fleeting years

often thought of him ? Or had he dropped out of her life entirely, until now someone had mentioned his name ? And her son—did he look like her ?

The horse began to paw ; the man mounted and instead of going on to his farm rode back to town. He went straight home and showed the letter to his wife.

She read the missive with an air of impatience ; and then went on industriously rolling pie-crust.

“ Well ? ” said Mrs. Brown.

“ Where shall we stow them ?—that ’s the question ! ”

“ But who is this Margaret Bulge that writes so as a matter of course and never even says ‘ by your leave ’ ? ”

“ Margaret Brydges ? why, don’t you know—she was Margaret Silvertown—I have told you of those rich people in Zanesville that I got acquainted with when I was a boy ! ”

“ Oh, seems to me I heard you tell the children some story about going to Zanesville with cattle ! ”

“ Why, yes, now you have it—but these runaways—we may have to keep them several days. The neighbors must not know and the children must not know——”

“ But both will know and you will be arrested and sent off to prison ! ”

“ No, Mary, these negroes are human beings and we must give our mite and help them to a place of freedom.”

“ Well, if you are bound to risk your neck, I s’pose the cave is the best place ! ”

Mrs. Brown always at first opposed her husband’s plans—not seriously, perhaps, but just through habit. Such a will as his could not be successfully opposed, and on all points, his opinions soon became hers. It is much easier to accept the views of a strong mind than to controvert them ; we move in the line of least resistance.

The “ cave ” was simply an outside cellar ; a contriv-

ance very common in those days and plentiful yet in the West, where they are known as "dug-outs." By digging down two or three feet and then building a low log house, with a pitched roof, made also of logs, and the whole banked up and covered with earth, the cave was complete. It was frost proof in winter, heat proof in summer, and wind proof the whole year round.

This cave was twenty feet long and ten wide; and the thrifty John Brown usually had packed away there enough provisions to keep his family a year.

"The cave! that's so, it's the only place where the children do not play and the neighbors don't go. It takes a woman to think of things!"

Mary was pleased, and now in full accord with her husband's wishes. She looked carefully around—all of the children were off in the woods save the three little ones who were too small to tell.

Husband and wife went to the cave to make arrangements for visitors. Boxes and barrels were piled up snugly and clean, dry straw was brought from the barn. Over this were thrown blankets; extra quilts were brought from the house and several beds were robbed of pillows in order that the weary runaways might rest. A new hasp was put on the cave door, closed with a padlock, and as Mr. Brown held up the key, Mrs. Brown smiled, as much as to say, "now we have 'em."

John Brown slept with one eye open that night, but the Scotch collie did not bark once the whole night through. Neither did he the next night, nor the next, and a full week passed with no change in the monotonous round of existence.

Mrs. Brown was feeling quite sure the whole matter was a hoax, and Mr. Brown feared that the fugitives had been recaptured.

It was near two weeks before, one night, a clatter of sand tossed against the side of the house awoke John Brown. He jumped out of bed and hurrying on his clothes, went to the door.

"Do you want to race horses?" came a voice out of the darkness. Eighteen years had passed since the vibration of sound waves from that throat had fallen on his tympanum. It was the same Jim Slivers.

"Yes, Jim, I'll race you—wait till I get a lantern."

"No, no, we don't need a light."

The men shook hands as though they had parted but the week before.

"And your—your runaways?" asked Brown.

"They are here, where will you keep them—in the clock?"

"No, in the cave yonder."

"Just the place, I knew you had sense!"

The two men walked down the road a hundred yards, and in the shadows of the bushes were six crouching figures. At a sign from Jim they came trooping out into the road and followed their leader straight to the cave. The mellow moonlight revealed the long straw bed. A blanket was given to each of the six dark figures and without a word they lay down to rest.

"Is there grub here to last until to-morrow night?" asked Jim.

"Yes, a boiled ham, cold potatoes and seven loaves of bread."

Brown brought a two-gallon can of milk from the spring house, and then the cave door was shut and locked and the key given to Jim.

The first faint pink streaks were coloring the east, and the loud twitter of birds in the bushes told of coming day.

“ I ’ve been to Hudson before, you know—will any o’ my friends recognize me ? ” asked Jim.

“ After all these years ? no. We are men now : when you were here last, you were but a boy.”

The men sat down on a log at the wood-pile.

“ And Margaret—tell me of Margaret—is she well ? ”

“ Oh, you mean the Missus ? ”

“ Yes, when did you see her last ? ”

“ A month ago—she lives in Cincinnati.”

“ And how did you ever get back to her ? ”

“ Well, I ’ll tell you—it was like this—”

And Jim told.

CHAPTER III

JIM SLIVERS RECOUNTS HISTORY

ALL of our acts merge so, one into the other, that in our own minds, life with its tragic tumults comes all as a matter of course. Lightning never strikes out of a clear sky, the storm clouds gradually gather; so to every crisis there is a gradual approach. Jim’s experience, to him, did not seem extraordinary.

When he was seized by the two legal kidnappers at Plainfield, he soon saw the uselessness of struggle. One of the men was George Silverton, the other was a professional detective. Jim was handcuffed to the officer, and George looked after them both, treating one just as well as the other. They went by boat from New Haven to New York, and then took passage on a schooner direct to Savannah. There was much eating, drinking and making merry on the way, in all of which Jim had his share.

He was a valuable piece of property and the men were not at all inclined to maltreat him. A live, good-

natured nigger was worth six hundred dollars; a sick, dispirited nigger might be worth half as much, and a dead nigger was not worth anything.

From scraps of conversation and the bilge of boozy talk eked out during the ten days' time, Jim surmised that someone had sent money to Margaret to purchase his freedom. And, moreover, he discovered that a bargain had been entered into between George and James Silverton; James taking the money and George the slave—provided he could catch him, and catch him he surely did; of this Jim was sure.

At Savannah, Jim was sold at auction, and sent to Mississippi. He did not deem this any special hardship—dozens of other slaves were sold too; what about it!

He had to work hard, but after a year, being intelligent and willing, he was given charge of a cotton-gin, and then in another year he was given charge of a mulatto girl and they were married after the manner of the times. They had their own little house and were living happily—he attending to the cotton-gin and she acting as laundress.

About this time a certain New Orleans cotton buyer appeared upon the scene and took a great fancy to Mrs. Jim Slivers. In fact, he bought her, and as salve for his broken heart, Jim was given his pick of five black wenches. But Jim had a streak of white man's sentiment in his heart, a very inconvenient thing to possess, and he pined for his lost mulatto girl, and was even so unreasonable as to refuse to look upon the dusky wenches. His master took his melancholy for a case of grumps and duly gave him twenty lashes on the bare back. He was ordered to take to his bosom one of the brunette belles and be happy, and if he still refused, there were the rice swamp and the cotton fields for him and all other rebellious ingrates.

A month before this alternative was offered, Jim had dispatched a letter to Margaret Silverton at Zanesville, telling her of his condition. Now it was a very serious offense for a slave to send a letter that had not on it the master's seal, and slaves were not allowed to receive letters.

Jim did not expect an answer, and in fact he had no well defined reasons for writing to Margaret at all, save perhaps to show her that he had not forgotten how to write, for she it was who had taught him this accomplishment—much against her father's will.

But one day Jim was hastily hustled out of the ginnery by his master and ordered to run to the creek, take a swim, dress himself in a new suit of white duck and hurry up to the City Tavern.

He was occasionally loaned out, or hired out, to act as waiter when there were banquets at the hotel; so he promptly obeyed as a matter of course.

But on getting to the tavern, great was his astonishment on being met by a tall, slender, handsome, lovely, angelic lady, in pale blue, who wished to purchase a house servant.

"Ah, and I know who the lady was," sighed John Brown.

"And who was it?" said James Golden, who was telling the story with much needless circumlocution, that out of regard for the dear reader we have omitted.

"Why, Margaret Silverton!"

"That 's where you 're wrong, John, 't was n't Miss Margaret, no such thing—you could n't guess in a month of Sundays!"

"Well, who was it?" asked John in a disappointed tone.

"Why, it was Missus Brydges—Madam Brydges she called herself—wife of old Cap Brydges!"

“ Indeed! ”

“ Yes, her name used to be Margaret Silverton, but 't was n't then! ” And Jim laughed a loud peal of merri-ment at his joke.

John Brown did not laugh; he groaned.

“ Now what you think that tall, graceful, angelic, lovely, sorrowful lady she do? ”

“ I don't know: what did she do? ”

“ Just look me over as if she never saw me; feel o' my arms; jab me with her fan; look at my teeth; test my eyesight, an' then run me up three flights of stairs with a big carpet bag balanced on my head to see if my wind was good. ‘ Look pleasant, you dam rascal,’ said my master, an' he up and gives me a kick behind when no one was lookin'. I was that near bustin' with laugh that I 'spect I was lookin' solemn, for all the while I knew the Missus was just makin' b'lieve and that she was goin' to buy me, whether or no. ‘ What 's your price,’ says she.

“ ‘ Fifteen hundred,’ says he.

“ ‘ I 'll give you a thousand,’ says she.

“ ‘ I 'll split the difference,’ says he.

“ ‘ Very well, I 'll take him,’ says she.

“ So when she had paid over the money, she ordered me to go to her room to strap her trunks. When I got there she just locked the door, and up and bust out cryin' and took on awful, but after a while she sobered down an' says, ‘ Where is John Brown? ’ How did I know where John Brown was? But she made me tell all 'bout you—go back to the very day I run away from Zanesville—when you met me at the Gulch—and then I had to follow clear through to Plainfield. If I skipped anything, that woman she made me go back an' tell 'bout it. And then I had to tell all 'bout Ole Doctor Melden

and what you done when you got her letters, an' who read 'em, an' what you said, an' what Ole Doctor Melden he said, an' what you both said. Then I told her how George and the other fellow stole me."

" ' And who sent me that money to pay for you,' she asked.

" ' John Brown,' says I.

" ' And did he earn it all,' says she.

" ' Yes,' says I. You see I did n't know, but only guessed.

" ' Well,' says she, ' I 've bought you now an' am goin' to make you free, just because John Brown wanted it so.' "

" And was she very miserable ? "

" What for should she be ? "

" With that man who was not her mate ! "

" They say she was mis'ble at first, but soon learned how to manage him, an' then he was mis'ble."

John did not know that in that most unhappy of all unhappy things, an unhappy marriage, the grewsomeness of the condition slinks away when bravely fronted; just as close acquaintanceship with crime removes its repulsiveness. Abstract complications and unseen terrors are the only things that really agitate. We can cope with the known.

From Natchez they took Jim to New Orleans and there he found his wife, Jennie.

Once back at Covington, Jim got an inkling that there was strife on hand as to the advisability of making him and his wife free, Mrs. Brydges insisting on manumission papers being made out immediately; but Captain Brydges had his way this time, and it was provided that on his death the slaves were to have their freedom.

There was not long to wait—in a year Captain

Brydges's death set them free. Margaret moved from Covington, across the river to Cincinnati. Jim and his wife still lived with Mrs. Brydges as servants.

Runaway slaves came to her house from time to time, from unknown places, brought by unknown men. The house was a large, old-fashioned mansion on the river bank, and often fugitives were landed from row boats. Sometimes they were brought in trunks, or boxes, or barrels, and after being kept for a day or a month, as the case might be, they were aided to go on North.

Jim was not sure about the number that Margaret assisted to escape in this way—he thought it might amount to twenty-five or more a year. He himself had made two trips between Toledo and Cincinnati, within six months, with fugitives, traveling by night. If the moon was bright they kept to the fields, but if it was dark they went by the road. There were friends along the way where they stopped, and if no “stations” were near, they simply slept out of doors and depended for food on berries and what they could pick up.

Constables and all officers were alert to capture fugitives, for it meant big rewards: so the “conductor” must know the country thoroughly, otherwise his party would fall into a trap.

The free-and-easy, matter-of-fact way that Jim discussed the question surprised Brown. Jim seemed to have no conscience in the matter at all—sentiment did not enter. The danger and excitement were much more satisfactory to him than steady work, and he chuckled to think of the discomfiture of the rich owners at the loss of their property. His pleasure was of the same sort that is shown by the mob when a rich man's house burns. We like to see the successful man undone. Yet back of this John could see a steady, determined effort on the

part of Margaret Brydges; she was working with a purpose.

“ How long has Mrs. Brydges been helping slaves to run away ? ”

“ Oh, since the Cap got short of breath ! ”

“ For ten years ? ”

“ Yes, she was through this very town herself eight years ago ! ”

“ Not through Hudson ? ”

“ Yes, that ’s a fact, through Hudson,” chuckled Jim. “ I was with her. We had a peddler’s cart, she wore a ragged dress an’ browned up like a gypsy. Our cart had a covered box with a lock on the side, a false bottom an’ a trap-door below, where our two runaways rode. We saw you, an’ the Missus she tried to sell you a tin pail, an’ she was going to tell you who she was, but you was so busy an’ you had so many babies to look after, an’ your wife was sick, so we just drove right along ! ”

John was astonished at this revelation. He could not help thinking that the woman was insane.

“ And does Mrs. Brydges go on such trips now ? ”

“ Oh, no, she just stays to home and supplies the money, and teaches the black young ’uns to read and write.”

“ And does she use all of her time and money in that way ? ”

“ Of course—she has ever so many thousand dollars every year from the steamboats she owns, and all of her money goes for niggers,” said Jim as he refilled his pipe. “ You see,” he continued, “ she calls it a holy warfare, an’ she thinks that if slaves now and then give their masters the slip, it will teach the owners to treat them well. For if a slave is used right he never thinks of freedom. But when you begin to use the blacksnake, an’ take away

his wife or sells his children, then he gets full o' hell, and wants to run away. Well, the Missus has friends around here and there, and if they see a case like this an' they can do it easy, they helps the nigger to scoot. An' the Missus she thinks that some day, oh, in a hundred years, all the slaves will get educated to a pint where they will all just get up an' declare themselves free, an' then the white folks who don't like slavery will stand by 'em an' that will be all there 'll be about it—see ?”

John Brown did not see, but the thought of this earnest woman working straight along on one idea impressed him most strangely; and that she should now select him to help her in this work gratified him.

“ You see,” said Jim, examining the stem of his pipe intently, “ the Missus and me had the same father—no use denyin' it, an' I am bound to help her.”

“ And God is the Father of us all, and so I'm bound to help her,” exclaimed Brown with a sudden determination.

“ I say now—haint you two men comin' to breckfuss, sometime!” called a sharp feminine voice from the back stoop. “ Here I've called you three times!”

While the men had sat there on the log the shadows of the night had flown away, the sun had come up from behind the hills and Mrs. Brown with the help of the children had prepared breakfast.

Still the master of the house sat there listening to the stranger's tale. The two men now arose and went forward to the house. They washed in a basin on the stoop at the back door where a gourd of soft soap stood; then wiped their hands on the roller towel and took seats at the table.

Strangers often dined at Brown's, so the new-comer attracted little attention from the younger generation. Mr. Brown asked the blessing.

A glimpse of a woman's form was seen coming around the corner of the house.

"It 's the Widow Judson," said Mrs. Brown to her husband. "I told her she could have some gooseberries if she would pick 'em herself. Oh, good-morning, Liza Ann, won't you have some breckfuss?"

"No, thankee, I 've just et, I come for the gooseberries—"

She did not finish the sentence. She caught sight of Jim Slivers as he sat there at the table.

Her face turned to stone.

She raised her hands above her head, gave a wild scream, and exclaiming, "My Jedediah! my Jedediah!" fell to the floor in a dead faint.

CHAPTER IV

A NIGHT-RIDE TO FREEDOM

"YOU better not risk yourself too much," explained Jim Slivers. "We 'll light out 'bout 'leven o'clock—the sky is dark so we can keep to the road and make fully fifteen miles!"

"And if I take you in a wagon we can go through to-night—it 's only thirty miles!"

"But it won't do—someone may flash a lantern on us."

"Let 'em flash. My scheme is this—you see that wagon box there is full two feet deep—now we 'll just lay boards across the top, and put on that hay rack and load up with half a ton or more of good honest hay. With a keyhole saw we can make a trap-door in the bottom of the wagon box and let the darkies crawl up in and

lay down—with some hay to burrow in it will be comfortable enough. Then you and I can climb up on top and away we go.”

“ I guess you be a Yankee,” drawled Jim through his nose.

“ Well, at any rate, I can invent ! ”

“ Is it patented ? ”

“ Not yet.”

“ Brown’s Patent Adjustable Nigger Carriage ! I will be agent for it.”

At nine o’clock when the children were all in bed, Brown and his visitor repaired to the barn. It did not take long to scuttle the wagon box and get on the hay rack. Then the hay was loaded, the colored freight duly packed away, two strong horses hitched on and the drive was begun.

“ And who is your confidential helper at Conneaut—you did not tell me.”

“ I tell nothin’,” answered Jim as he lay on his back looking up at the stars.

“ But you told me about Margaret.”

“ I would n’t have, only she said I must.”

“ But where am I to go in Conneaut ? ”

“ You mean where are you to deliver the goods ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ I ’ll show you when we get there—you see in this business we do no gossipin’, an’ the less one knows about other folks, the better. You might be called on in court to answer questions an’ it ’s mighty convenient to know nothin’ at such times.”

“ I see ! ”

“ That ’s why the Missus an’ me did n’t stop to visit with you years ago when we came through with our tin-ware. ‘ He ’s happy,’ said the Missus, ‘ he ’s married

an' happy—we 'll not break in on his peace—the world can only be reformed by restless, mis'ble people.' "

" Did Margaret say that ? "

" Yes. "

" Well, it 's true, but why should she have sent you to me now ? "

" I 'm blamed if I know. Only she says to me 'bout a year ago—' If John Brown was n't rich and prosperous he 'd be a great man—great as Cæsar or Demosthenes; but when a man is happy he is content, and if he 's content he lets well-enough alone. He 's like a fly stuck in 'lasses—for the first time in his life he 's got all the 'lasses he wants an' he just stays there till he dies.' "

" And that 's a rich man, is it ? "

" For sure—a rich man is a blue-bottle stuck in treacle; treacle is good, but it gets away with a heap o' flies. "

" Then for blue-bottles the love of treacle is the root of all evil ? "

" I 'spect it is! "

" But you said the work of reforming the world is done by unhappy men. How about yourself ? "

" Me ? I 'm not reformin' the world—I 'm working for the Widow Brydges—twenty-five dollars a month an' expenses—I do just what I 'm told, that 's all. "

" But you seem to be quite a philosopher—I 'd never have thought it of you. "

" A man who travels nights, does a heap o' thinkin'."

" I guess that is so; shepherds were the first philosophers, for they tended their flocks by night. "

" Yes, the night sort o' shuts everything out—leaves you alone with God! "

" Why, Jim, you never used to talk like that. "

" Did n't I ? Well, I 'm near forty years old, John Brown, an' so are you. "

"That 's so," said Brown, shifting his position uneasily. He flicked the off horse with the whip, and the team responded, moving forward at a brisk trot.

At about one o'clock they drew into a wood at one side of the road. Brown crawled under the wagon, pushed up the trap-door, and the "goods" climbed out to stretch their tired limbs. Mrs. Brown had put up a big basket of lunch, and as the fugitives ate they were inclined to be jolly, in view of their near approach of freedom.

Jim ordered silence. It was a curious thing to Brown to see a touch of arrogance in Jim's manner towards his subjects. But he remembered that the occupation makes the man, and the overseer is perforce a bully. Slavery breeds tyrants. John talked to these unfortunate colored people in a sympathetic way as they stood there in the shadows, eating the bread and meat and hard-boiled eggs. They answered his questions in a manner that showed their gratification at being treated as equals. But Jim took the words out of their mouths and answered for them, explaining in a very cold-blooded, matter-of-fact style, that "this one is the wife of that man, and this of that one yonder, and t'other of him."

As he spoke he touched the respective persons with his cane.

Further than this, only intelligent niggers were helped to run away; there were lazy niggers, and brutal niggers, and just plain, ornery niggers, and these could all go to the rice swamps and be blanked; but the Missus, she never lifted a finger 'cept where wife was to be taken from husband, or pickaninny from its mammy.

Jim had gotten so acclimated to the slave mart, that he still regarded negroes as chattles and not as human beings; and John could not help but note how his man-

ner tallied with that of the genuine slave-trader, for he talked before these people as if they were both sexless and senseless.

Again the load of hay moved on towards Lake Erie. In two hours the village of Conneaut was reached. Dogs barked, cats sputtered, cocks crew, but the silent streets gave no other sign of life.

In a certain cove of the harbor Jim expected to see the red and green lights of a little schooner, but the cove was devoid of a single spar.

Jim was disappointed. He turned and followed up the long village street, motioning that John should follow with the team. By the side of a big, box-like church, that stood out square and cheerless in its coat of white paint, Jim stopped. He shoved back the sliding gate, followed on to the barn that stood behind the house, and opening the doors, John drove his team with the load of hay inside. It was now nearly daylight.

Again the trap-door was opened, out slid the six refugees, and at a sign from their master, shinned up the ladder into the haymow. He followed them, pulling the ladder up after, explaining to John that when the folks in the house were up and astir, that he should go in and he would be properly entertained—that was all understood. But as for himself, being known in Conneaut, he had to lie low.

Brown unhitched his horses, put them in stalls and fed them.

Had John Brown been asked at this time of his life “what is God’s best gift to man?” he would probably have replied, “a horse.” The love-lorn adorer of some fair maid is apt to reach a point where he finds balm in solitude; but the horse-lover knows neither surfeit nor bitter pang of affection unrequited.

John caressed his sleek Morgans, and rubbed their sweaty coats with wisps of straw. Ere long he heard sounds of stirring life about the house.

Looking through a crack in the side of the barn he saw a tall, bearded man in a dressing gown at the wood-pile, splitting kindling to make the kitchen fire; the man's face looked strangely familiar. Soon a dumpy little woman came out on the back steps and began to peel potatoes from a pan that she held in her lap.

This well-to-do merchant and land-owner peeking out of the crack of a barn at this man and his wife was a funny proceeding! The man in the barn was not given to o'ermuch mirth, but he laughed aloud, and then walked out into the daylight, still smiling.

The woman with the potatoes in her lap gave a little scream, and the tall man in the dressing gown stopped splitting wood and looked around:

"I swan, if it is n't John Brown, or else his ghost!"

"And I swan, if it is n't Walter Warren and his wife!"

The little woman wiped her hands on her apron and gave John Brown the heartiest kind of a handshake (but no kiss) and Walter Warren shook both his hands and pounded him on the back in fond delight.

There was a quick explanation in an undertone and remarks of "Oh! ho!" "I see!" "Yes, yes," and then the conversation turned to matters domestic. Walter and Rachel had six children, but John's score was far ahead.

The Rev. Warren had held pastorates at Cleveland and Toledo. One year before he had moved to Conneaut. John had heard of his successful preaching from time to time, and he had probably heard too of his living at Conneaut, but a busy man like Brown could not keep track of everyone in his head, and the fact that Rachel and

Walter lived in " New Plymouth " had entirely slipped his mind.

There was much " visiting " and many questions to ask and answer.

The young Warrens were brought out one by one and sent through their paces for the visitor's benefit, and John did not fail to inwardly note and outwardly acknowledge that they were a remarkably fine brood. The eldest boy was sixteen. He was then teaching his first term of school and expected some day to be a preacher. The second child was a girl nearly fifteen. Her name was Miriam, and Brown noticed that she was a fine lass and a full two inches taller than her mother.

John's eyes followed Rachel as she moved about at her work, and he saw that the matronly little woman was supremely happy and all bound up in the love of her husband and the care of her children. John noted, too, that husband and wife consulted on all manner of little domestic arrangements and took a quiet satisfaction in each other's companionship; and he could not but compare his life with theirs. His wife did her work and he did his. He could go or stay—she cared little. Her confidantes were among the neighbor women, and as for his own affairs, he kept them to himself. They did not quarrel, for John Brown was not a quibbling, quarrelsome man; he ordered certain things done and they were done.

As the day wore on and old acquaintances had all been well discussed, conversation lagged a little. Brown had discovered that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Warren was vitally interested in his specialty. They did not believe in slavery, but they were first led to harbor fugitives out of pure philanthropy; the negroes were cold and a' hungared, and on Jim Slivers's request, they had taken them

in and warmed and fed them. Jim had no great amount of cerebral gray matter, but he had the nose of a detective, and in some way had made the discovery that the Rev. Walter Warren was a son of Thomas Warren at Plainfield. And as he had worked in Thomas Warren's saw-mill, he had a sort of claim on Thomas Warren's son, and he presented the matter in a way that caused the Rev. Warren and his wife to accede to his request and care for his runaways. Besides this Mr. James Golden explained that they were not really fugitives, but only colored people going to Canada for their health; and to preserve them from unjust suspicions, their presence must not be revealed.

John could not help imagining the result to each, had he followed her mother's wishes and married Rachel. In several ways she was superior to both his former and present wife, yet in his heart he congratulated himself that he had allowed this worthy minister to wed her. She was happy and content; with him she could not have been, for he could not have entered into pattypan emotions, and his aspirations were of a character that could neither be kept from her nor explained. As it was now, he lived within himself, and no one was hurt.

That night there were lights hanging from the main mast of a fishing smack down in the cove.

At midnight, seven persons were rowed out to the anchored boat, and climbed aboard.

"In six weeks I will see you—in six weeks!" Jim had said to John as they parted.

Brown went back up the hill and presented the Rev. Walter Warren with half a ton of good, honest hay. He backed his wagon out of the barn and started on his night-ride for Hudson.

CHAPTER V

TROUBLE IN THE CHURCH

THAT a lone woman, ill much of the time and weak, should use her time and money in an endeavor to make bondsmen free, seemed stranger and stranger the more Brown thought about it. And he thought about it a good deal.

There were nearly three million slaves in the United States, and this woman, at the most, only gave freedom to fifty a year—it would take sixty thousand years for her to accomplish her purpose. It was like baling out the ocean with a teaspoon.

And why did she do it? Only for this: that husband and wife should not be separated, nor child taken from mother. In the name of love—the love of man for woman, of parent for child. She would hold love inviolate. And therefore she sought to banish traffic in men and to make them free.

Brown thought about it. He thought about it at work, thought about it as he walked and rode, dreamed of it at night. Soon he began to talk about the subject of slavery; he discussed it with his father, with his neighbors, and at prayer-meetings when he exhorted the brethren, he spoke of slavery as “the one blot on our boasted Christian civilization.” That we should affect to believe in the suffering, unselfish Christ and yet buy and sell men and women in the market place, was the basest hypocrisy.

After Brown had spoken on the subject in prayer-meetings twice in succession, the pastor thought it time to say something, too, which he did about as follows:

“ My Christian brethren : You have heard what our

dear brother, Deacon Brown, has said to-night on the subject of slavery. It is a great theme, just as emigration and commerce are great themes, but why it should be brought in and discussed at a meeting set apart for prayer and praise, I cannot understand. We are here to worship God, not to talk about property in Kentucky, and if black people are God's children as Deacon Brown has said four times this one evening, why let God take care of 'em—we will sing from page two sixty two—' Oh, how happy are we, who in Jesus agree, And expect his return from above '—all sing."

"Not yet—you can sing when I 'm done—"

The hymn was started with intent to sing Brown down.

"Silence!" he ordered in a voice that flashed out like a sword leaping from its scabbard.

The singing abruptly ceased. Even the pastor's voice failed him. There was a silence so intense that it could be heard. Brown left his pew and walked out in front of the dozen expectant people. His gray eyes gleamed and the stiff, bristling hair stood up on his head.

The people knew that Brown had temper and courage. They were sure that there would be a burst of invective if not something worse. The preacher cast a hurried look around and calculated the height of the open window. But the storm-cloud had passed and when after an instant Brown spoke, it was in a mild, low voice:

"My friends, I 'm sorry that we have gotten so warm over this subject, and I only wish now to say that I stand by all I have said on this matter of slavery. The black man is God's free child and should be free to worship God, but as long as he is a slave he is not allowed to do so. I wish to say before you all that from this time on I propose to do all that I can to do away with human slavery in my country."

Brown sat down. There was another silence; no one was in haste to sing.

"Is the brother all through?" asked the pastor in his blandest, meetin'-house tone. "Because if he's not, we want to hear all he has to say of this foreign subject, now!"

There was another pause and then the hymn was sung and the congregation dismissed. The preacher made great show of shaking hands with the Deacon and thanked him for his "manly apology."

"But I did n't apologize," said Brown.

"Why, you said you were sorry—did n't he, Sister Jenkins?"

Sister Jenkins was sure he did, so were several others. They tried to laugh it off, but Brown did not smile.

"Now, Brother Brown," said the minister, affectionately taking him by the button-hole, "I'll show you fifty places in the Bible where slavery is justified."

"And I'll show you sixty where polygamy is justified!"

"There, there! you know those ignorant black men could not take care of themselves even if they were free—the ideal condition is where the strong care for the weak!"

"But what if the strong degrade the weak?"

"Now, dear Brother, just give me your hand—we'll say no more. I'll overlook all your harsh words if you will agree never to mention this subject in prayer-meeting—come, that's fair!"

The preacher held out his hand. Brown refused to take it. "Your terms do not suit," said Brown. He turned and passed out of the church.

The people standing about were plainly with the pastor. He was a stout man of fifty or more—a man of

some education and considerable tact. And while he did not expect to convince Brown of his folly, yet he had done better; he had won the sympathy of his people. He had offered to shake hands with Deacon Brown; Deacon Brown had refused. The next day it was the talk of the town that John Brown had publicly refused to shake hands with his pastor.

The sermon the following Sunday was a powerful one. The text was: "Let every man build over against his own house." It was not a written sermon, and there were no notes. The pastor was full of his theme, and his strong point was that if we attended to things near at hand, we did well; but to trouble ourselves about distant matters or meddle in questions that did not directly affect us, was the direst folly.

In fact, it was a general reminder that everyone should attend to his own business. To care for one's wife and children and those directly connected with him, was all that a man could possibly do, and to go gallivantin' all over creation for something to find fault with was pesky foolish. Slavery, for instance, was wrong when viewed from certain standpoints. So it was wrong to kill a cow, but we had to kill cattle in order that we might live. God had permitted slavery through thousands of years, and He was gradually doing away with it; and if we would only give God time, He would smooth out all the crooked places. "And finally, brethren, let each man build over against his own house."

It was a powerful sermon. Much of it was delivered straight at Deacon Brown's head, and there was considerable craning of necks to see how the Deacon took his medicine; but he never flinched.

But the sermon did not silence John Brown. At the grocery, the post-office, or on the street corners he would

discuss the question of slavery with anyone who cared to talk about it. In all of the Southern, and several of the Northern States, it was a crime to teach a negro to read, and a bill was before the Ohio legislature making it a penal offense "to hire, harbor, feed or encourage in anyway any negro or any person in whose veins there is supposed to be negro blood, until such negro had proven before the nearest magistrate that he or she is not a fugitive."

Brown protested strongly against this law, which he claimed was against the American maxim, that a man must be considered innocent until he is proven guilty. But the preacher retorted that "a negro was not a man, but a nigger," and so the argument moved in a circle.

Had Brown been willing to let the matter drop, his neighbors would have taken him back into full fellowship and said no more. But he was one of that kind of men who, when they harbor a thought, are taken captive by it. An idea possessed him.

Seven weeks had come and gone since he bade good-bye to Jim Slivers, and now Jim had come again. Not by night this time, but in daytime and alone.

Jim carried a stout stick over his shoulder and a handkerchief knotted up, in way of baggage. He was dusty and begrimed, having evidently come on a long journey; yet there was a half grin lurking around his mouth as he walked into the tannery yard where Brown was alone.

"An' how 's my wife?" asked Jim the first thing.

"Who?"

"My darling—fifty years old last May and my darling still!"

"Oh, you mean that woman who took you for the ghost of her husband?"

“ Of course ; go tell her I ’ve come for her at last—at last ! ”

“ Don’t be foolish, Jim. What ’s the news—have you seen Margaret ? ”

“ Call her the Madam, please.”

“ Well, then, have you seen the Madam ? ”

“ I reckon ; else how ’d I fetch this letter to you from her ? ”

Jim reached into the inside of his vest and brought out a letter, folded, sealed, and directed to “ John Smith.”

“ Is it for me ? ” asked Brown as he looked at the superscription.

“ I ’spect, leastwise ’t aint for me.”

Brown broke the seal and read :

DEAR JOHN SMITH :

The bearer has told me of your great kindness and the manly assistance you rendered in getting his freight through. Your helping me, thus endorsing my work, has given me renewed courage and zeal.

The present case is a very pathetic one ; Jim will tell you of it.

May Heaven bless you.

Sincerely your friend,

M.

There was no date, no signature and his own name was replaced by another, but the very omissions were precious to Brown ; it left something to the imagination—there was an understanding.

To love and to have an understanding ! no happier fate can come to a man than this.

Still, Brown had no idea that he loved this woman—far from it. She was simply an old acquaintance and he was interested in her—that ’s all. Besides that, he was a

married man and had no right to love any woman but his wife.

He read the letter twice, standing there in the tannery yard. Jim picked up a stick and began whittling on it carelessly as if time were no object.

"She says 'the present case is a very pathetic one,'—what does she mean—your freight?"

"She says it 's what?"

"Pathetic."

"What 's that?"

"Sorrowful."

"Lordy, she 's right. I 've walked eighteen mile since sun-up to tell you 'bout it."

"Well, go on!"

"One buck nigger, one wench, and three pickaninnies!"

"You mean a man, his wife and their three children?"

"Yes."

"Well, where are they? Speak up quick!"

"Eighteen miles back, I told you—two pickaninnies sick and the wench she 's plum tuckered out and wants to die—all were sold an' to be separated—Missus up and bribes Sheriff an' he lets 'em run away to river—I meets 'em in a skiff, gets 'em 'cross—been three weeks on way—all hands tuckered and camped in woods—babies sick—that 's all there is 'bout it."

Jim spat out this explanation all at one mouthful. He stopped as suddenly as he had begun, and went on with his whittling.

"And you have walked on ahead and now want me to go back with you?"

"Well, I reckon!"

"How shall we go?"

"The load of hay is all right."

It was near noon and the children were playing around

the house. To load up hay and cart it away would excite their curiosity, for hay was hauled to the barn, not away from it. Then the neighbors might ask questions, too, for Brown's teaming was usually done by hired men, so all things considered, it was resolved best to wait until night.

This was accordingly done. After the children were all abed, Brown and Jim adjusted the hay rack on the wagon bed, laying all the boards on top so there would be "plenty of space in the hold for storage," as Jim expressed it. Mrs. Brown held the lantern and the two men piled on a goodly load and bound it down with the boom pole. They hitched on a stout team of young horses, and drove away, promising to return by daylight. Mrs. Brown slept with one eye open and listened with both ears for the rattle of the returning wagon, but she did not hear it.

Daylight came and the children were up earlier than usual. Mrs. Brown sent them back to bed, but it was no use, they were thoroughly wide awake. They had breakfast without the master of the house and the good mother had to deal in white lies to stop the questionings—children are so very curious.

It was near nine o'clock before a boy came running up the hill, to tell Mrs. Brown that her husband was down by the tannery badly hurt.

CHAPTER VI

NOTHING CAN BE CONCEALED LONG

THE night was dark, but Brown knew his road and sent the horses along at a good stiff pace.

Ten miles were turned off—fifteen: it was so dark that Jim could not see the stones he had placed in the road

to mark the spot where they should sheer off into the forest. In an hour it became evident that they had missed the place; so they cramped, backed up, turned around and headed back. Jim walked slowly ahead, peering with his eyes and feeling with his feet for the little pyramid of stones. An hour went by in anxious search when a joyous little whistle from Jim announced that the lost was found.

The horses were tied securely to a clump of stout saplings and the two men moved off into the blackness of the wood. A peculiar chucking call from Jim was soon answered by a similar sound, and under the drooping boughs of a protecting pine were the refugees.

Brown assured the unseen fugitives that they were among friends as he put his hands down on two woolly heads. He lifted a baby form in each strong arm and started back for the wagon, the others following.

The fevered faces of the children pillowed themselves on the man's neck, and he knew that hunger, sleeplessness and damp had done their work, and if the children could not be given good care and that quickly, their earthly troubles would soon be over.

Reaching the load of hay the trap-door in the bottom of the wagon was pushed up and the black man and his wife crawled in, and the three children were passed in after. The horses were unhitched and the northward drive begun.

Brown restrained the impatient steeds, as the road in places was rough and in the darkness the ruts could not be avoided, for he was mindful that the wagon had no springs, and the thought of the aching heads below made him lessen each possible jolt and jar.

Jim lay on his back, looking up at the sky, where the stars now began to twinkle, and chanted a wild, weird

song that had been passed down through the generations from some Congo jungle. Melody got the better of his spirit and the hum nearly grew into song, when John ordered silence. Then there was only the patter of unshod hoofs on the hard road and the monotonous rumble of the heavy wagon.

Daylight was beginning to gleam in the east, with Hudson still ten miles away.

It was very evident that to push straight on would reveal to the curious villagers that the drive had been a long one.

Two hours earlier would have placed the "goods" safely in the cave while all Hudson was abed; as it was now, all Hudson would be astir.

What was to be done?

To wait until friendly night came again meant possible death to the sick children, for the food they had was insufficient and not of the right kind. To drive straight ahead now meant a buzz of idle talk that might not be so idle after all; to wait an hour, rub the horses dry and go in slowly, would attract little attention, as it would be thought that Brown was merely drawing hay from his farm. Then a chance could be taken when no one was around to transfer the fugitives from the wagon to the cave.

This latter plan seemed the best, so they adopted it.

It was near nine o'clock when John Brown's gray team was seen coming down the hill into Hudson. There was a load of hay on the wagon, and, of course, the driver could not apply his brake. Yet the team was strong and able to hold the load by the neck-yoke, anyway.

But suddenly an accident occurred. It was the worst kind of an accident than can possibly befall a man driving two nervous horses. If a wheel comes off, the axle

only drops and drags; should a rein break, you simply pull on one line until your horses are in the ditch or against the fence; should the breeching give way, you keep your running steeds in the middle of the road and trust to luck; if your horses kick, lean back so you will not get hit and let them kick; if they shy and lunge to one side, they can only tip you over.

But if you are driving a spirited team hitched to a wagon, down a steep hill, and you have no brake, and suddenly the neck-yoke gives way, and the wagon tongue drops to the ground, you had better take a last flashing look at this beautiful world and commend your soul to God.

For quicker than the flash of thought, the horses will lunge forward and no man born of woman can hold them. At such an instant the frantic strength of the mad brutes is in league with the law of gravitation, and Death crouches near and laughs.

When that wagon tongue dropped and began plowing a furrow in the dust, Brown made one heroic effort to pull the horses into the ditch, but the wagon was on their heels, and they shot forward straight for the entrance to the bridge. They were going like a comet, when the point of the tongue struck a stone, and the tongue, acting as a fulcum, lifted the wagon straight ten feet into the air. The load of hay, boomed fast to the rack, shot forward, fell to one side and turned bottom side up as it slipped over the embankment. The horses, with the wheels of the wagon, dashed through the bridge like the wind, and up the village street. Half the town rushed down to the bridge where lay the toppled load of hay. But where was the driver? A score of people looked on with staring eyes, all talking at once. A peculiar voice was heard! where did it come from?

Someone looked up at the top of the old wood covered bridge. There on the roof of the bridge, resting as if it had been placed there by giant hands, was a wagon box. Standing up in this box were a very black negro, a negro woman, and clinging to them, too frightened to cry, three little black children.

"Was you driving this team?" called a voice from the crowd.

"No," answered the black man.

"Then who was?"

"Two white men."

"Where are they?"

"Under that pile of hay!"

CHAPTER VII

DISGRACE FACED BY FRANKNESS

WHEN John Brown and Jim Slivers were dug out from under that pile of hay—good, honest hay—they were insensible. But they did not die; destiny had reserved them for a different fate, so a few dashes of cold water brought them to. Mrs. Brown arrived on the scene very much frightened, but quite relieved to find that she was not a widow. Her husband had just opened his eyes and requested that no more water be flung at him.

A ladder had been brought from the saw-mill and the family of unhappy blacks were assisted from their elevated position. But with that cruel sense of humor that rustics often possess, the wagon bed was left on its perch as a monument to the infamy of its owner.

Mrs. Brown wept, and seeing the five trembling colored mortals, fell a-scolding.

“ You ’re a fool, John Brown, I told you not to do it ! ” And seeing the gaping crowd around, she addressed her remarks to them and absolved herself from all responsibility in the matter. There was a slight scalp wound on Brown’s head and as he sat up the red drops slowly trickled down his face. The sight of blood brought back the wifely sympathy and Mrs. Brown tied up the shaggy head with a handkerchief.

Jim still smoked. He expected one of two things would surely occur; they would all be arrested or they would have to fight. He was ready to accept whichever horn of the dilemma came, but neither was in store.

Brown was still slightly dazed. He put his hand to his head in apparent helplessness and tried to stand on his feet. The crowd were inclined to laugh; Brown had been caught in the very act of nigger stealing—ha, ha, ha!

Suddenly a white-haired woman appeared on the scene; a strong woman whose only mark of age was her white hair. She had come across the bridge and having pushed her way through the crowd, gave a quick glance about and seemed to comprehend the situation. She saw the trembling negroes, she saw that Brown was injured, she guessed that Brown was the cause of the negroes being there and that the people standing about considered the situation funny, and moreover she saw that they had no intention of giving succor or aid to these refugees.

“ The jail ’s the place for them ! ” shouted a blatant voice.

Ruth Crosby had no very fixed ideas on the subject of human rights—she was too busy doing good to formulate a creed—but she had a great, generous, motherly heart.

She took the sick baby out of the colored woman’s

arms, and whispered to her black sister that no harm should come to her or the babes.

“Come,” said Ruth, “we will go!”

Brown got his strength back, and going over took the second child.

The crowd, now silent, parted and Ruth led the way through the bridge, carrying the black baby. Brown followed with baby Number Two, then came Mrs. Brown leading Number Three, the negro man and his wife next, while in the rear came Jim Slivers calmly smoking; behind all trooped half a hundred villagers of both sexes, all ages, and all sorts and conditions.

“To my house, not yours!” said John to Ruth. So Ruth turned to the left and the procession passed up the little slope to the residence of John Brown, on the outskirts of the town. The villagers fell off by twos or threes and went home to talk it over, so when Brown’s front gate was reached, Jim Slivers was the tail of the kite.

The fugitives were not put in the cave this time; they were given the best rooms the house afforded. Ruth’s sole occupation for many years had been nursing the sick; she was an expert. She remained and took sole charge of the children, and they were ill—no mistake.

Brown loaded a long, squirrel rifle that hung over the kitchen door, and set it in the corner. Then he busied himself at the wood-pile, fully determined that he would allow no neighbors, officer, sheriff or whatnot to enter the yard.

It’s a serious thing to arrest a man in a rural district; and especially so in a pioneer country. If a citizen has property, a fair name, and chief of all the reputation of being able to fight, he might commit almost any crime, even to murder, and still go free.

No constable nor sheriff came to Brown's. They knew better. The majesty of the law can wait when there is a strong chance of its agent being perforated with lead. Brown was not a quarrelsome man, but he had a moral dignity which, added to his physical strength, made him respected. Only a year before he had trounced the town bully with a hickory gad, and on several occasions he had gone alone to objectionable persons and told them to leave town, and they went.

When night came the baby was no better. Through stress of hardship and excitement, the mother's milk had failed and the little sufferer had actually been starved. The second child was about two years old and the baby only six months; they were too ill to go on—what was to be done?

"Leave them here," said Ruth. "The father, mother, and the four-year-old girl can go on ahead, and when the babies get strong we will send them forward."

So that night Jim Slivers took the three and started for Conneaut on foot. It was the best thing to do—get them to a place of safety at once. And as for the babies, Brown promised that they would be safely handed over to their parents as soon as they were well and strong.

Hudson now fairly bubbled with excitement. How long had Deacon Brown been in this business? Some said for ten years and they even gave the exact number of thousand slaves he had stolen. He had grown rich at it, they were sure. It was hinted that when a goodly lot of negroes were gotten together in Canada, they were pounced upon and sent by the ship-load around the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic and then down to Charleston, S. C., where they were sold at auction.

Nobody mentioned these rumors to Brown—they knew better. People avoided him on the street; if he

approached a group, they would instantly disperse; when he entered the post-office, all conversation would suddenly cease; some treated him with awkward politeness, and were evidently afraid of him, but when his back was turned, they winked at their neighbors, and smiled.

Even John Brown's father shook his head and said that the laws of the land should be respected. In the whole village he had but one staunch supporter, and that was Ruth Crosby; and it must be owned that it was largely accident that landed her on his side and not on the other.

Women are more heroic than men; in surgical operations their chances of recovery are better; in spite of the pains of childbirth they live longer than men; when worst comes to worst they are braver. Just as a tigress can whip a lion, or the she-wolf with cubs is more than a match for a bear, so does a true woman rise to the level of events. In times of disgrace the woman clings to the man, where, too often, if the man can escape he does so, and allows his mate to face the pack alone.

Ruth Crosby had been touched by the sight of those suffering blacks; she saw that the crowd was against them and straightway her indignation joined hands with her mother-love, and casting a look of defiance on the mob, she stood sponsor for the friendless. It was a very womanly act on the part of Ruth, as those who have seen women in war-time know full well.

And once having committed herself to the side of the slave, and espoused John Brown's cause, the sense of loyalty in her heart, and the "stubbornness" in her nature would not allow her to retreat. When petty persecution followed, it only cemented the bond, for it is injustice that makes martyrs. An attempt to make a woman give up either a man or a sentiment only makes

her cling the closer. Thus do time and chance push us like pawns upon this chess-board of life.

People looked askance at the Widow Crosby as she walked on the street, and the neighbor women ceased to run in and chat. She was left quite alone—the hint having been given out that “she was not all that she should be.”

The two colored babies got well and strong; the product of John Brown’s dairy seemed to agree with them. Children know no caste; they never draw the color line, and the Brown children thought the negro babies very charming additions to the family. And one Sunday when the Browns filed into church to fill three pews, there was a shiny black youngster, well dressed and clean, among the little flock.

Many in the audience tittered, one man guffawed aloud, several snorted with indignation and a full half dozen tramped out. Altogether, though, the sight of the colored baby was rather amusing to the audience than otherwise; just as a cat on the stage makes a laugh, or a dog sniffing up the aisle takes all attention away from the preacher. The minister noticing the commotion, arose from behind his high pulpit, and, adjusting his brass-rimmed spectacles, looked rebukingly around for the cause of the trouble. At last his glance fell on the black baby, and the storm-cloud in his serious visage grew denser.

He tried to catch Deacon Brown’s eye; at last he thought he had, and he pantomimed that Brown should remove the black baby. But Brown did not take the hint. Then the preacher, realizing that he could not compete as an attraction against the wee darling, cleared his throat and in a solemn voice said: “Brother Brown, oblige me by removing that object which you have wrongfully brought into this sacred place.”

But Brother Brown was both blind and deaf.

The hymn was announced, the Scripture read, the long prayer gone through with, and the sermon begun. And all during the sermon the black baby slept with its head in John Brown's lap.

It was certainly a very presumptuous thing for Brown to do—take a negro to meetin'. For there was a question whether negroes had souls; indeed several books had been written, proving that they had not.

Perhaps when Brown got home that day after church he congratulated himself that he had won in the little game of bluff, but his satisfaction was slightly cooled the next day when he received an official notice to present himself in ten days and show cause why he should not be expelled from church.

Ruth Crosby was also presented with a similar notice.

The day of the examination came, and the defendants were both present.

The indictment recited how Ruth Crosby and John Brown had harbored runaway slaves, against the peace and good order of the community, and against the laws of God and the State. Further than this, they had taught negroes to read.

This last accusation was quite gratuitous, but the intent was to make the charge as damning as possible.

The minister had the clerk read the charges, and then the senior Deacon of the church got up and proposed that if the defendants would simply plead guilty to the charges and ask the forgiveness of the brethren assembled, promising not to repeat the offense, the meeting could then be turned into one of prayer and praise. The good old man expressed his love for the Widow Crosby and John Brown and spoke of his high regard for their characters; he recited how even David had fallen,

but the Lord had reinstated him in favor—why should they not do the same by these erring ones ?

The preacher endorsed this conciliatory appeal, he showed how it contained the true Christian spirit—a slowness to condemn and a readiness to forgive. He sat down and there was a breathless silence when Brown arose to reply.

He simply plead guilty to the charges as made: he had done nothing but what he thought was right—that is, he believed he had done the will of God.

“ Do you think it is the will of God that you should harbor runaway slaves ? ” severely asked the preacher.

“ I do,” said John Brown.

“ And you, Widow Crosby ? ” said the preacher, facing the woman.

“ I do,” said Ruth Crosby.

The accused were asked to withdraw. They did so and the session was continued behind locked doors.

The next day John Brown and Ruth Crosby were notified that their names were stricken from the church books “ on account of conduct unbecoming to professing Christians.”

CHAPTER VIII

“ NIGGER STEALER ! NIGGER STEALER ! ”

CHURCH trials often afford considerable satisfaction to church members. Spite and a spirit of revenge are never absent on such occasions and the opportunities for pokes under the fifth rib are readily embraced. Feuds sometimes find vent in church trials, and it must be admitted that a church trial is not so bad as a vendetta. But when there is a church trial the devil laughs,

and so do the infidels. In fact, the village infidel — the corner grocery atheist — is usually more interested in the issue than the average church member.

The scoffers were jubilant when John Brown was “turned out o’ church.” They were all unmindful of the inconsistency of their position, which assumed that all church members were hypocrites, anyway, and failed to see the logical sequence that the man turned out must at least be different from those who discarded him.

Then to be turned out of church in those days, before heresy was popular, meant disgrace; it was not many years before, that all criminals were tried by the church, and people had a fixed idea that if a jury of Christian people said a man was bad, it must be so.

Children ever adopt the opinions of their elders, and when the grown folks in a community cease to respect a man, the youngsters tell him so. The growing boys of civilized parents are always cruel, and the weak-minded, the drunken, the friendless, are legitimate targets in any village for mud balls and decayed vegetables. The victim of the stocks was ever the butt of all the cruel pranks that youth could invent, and no sooner is the best of men bound with cords than we scourge him, spit upon him and crown him with thorns.

The night after that church trial at Hudson, merry havoc was played with Ruth Crosby’s flower-beds, the front door of her house was smeared with tar, and in the morning several dead cats adorned the little porch.

The next day she locked the cottage where she had lived so many busy, useful years and took up her residence with the family of John Brown.

There was no intention of retreating from the position they had taken on the subject of human rights. The more they studied the theme of slavery, the plainer it

was to them that their course was right. The more they thought of slavery, the firmer were their ideas concerning its iniquity.

A letter was sent to Margaret Brydges telling her of the mishap to the load of hay, and how they had been turned out of church simply because the load upset. The whole matter was treated lightly, but Mrs. Brydges had had a little experience herself in ostracism and she knew what it meant.

Margaret sent a prompt reply expressing her sympathy, and quoting the beatitude, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

The letter further explained that a negro who could read and write was a factor in freedom's cause and that the education of the negro meant the honey-combing of the "peculiar institution." So the rabid fear on the part of slave-holders about the blacks being taught had a basis in fact; and from their standpoint the placing of a penalty on the three R's was a perfectly justifiable move. Men who wish to hold other men in leash have good reason for preferring mental darkness rather than light.

So a part of Margaret Brydges's plan of campaign was to educate. Teaching blacks to read and write was paving the way for emancipation. Vast numbers of slaves were sunk so low that they did not realize their condition and had no conception of what freedom meant. But to teach a man to read was to supply him the tools for further progress.

Through Margaret's influence, and by the help of certain funds which she had collected and given, the college at Oberlin now received colored people on exactly the

same footing as whites. Her ambition was to start a school that would be a feeder for Oberlin.

To this end Margaret had turned her house into a school. The scholars ranged in years from five to fifty; and after explaining this in her letter she ended with a strong appeal that Ruth Crosby should leave Hudson at once, meet her in Cincinnati and assist in this plan of conducting a school for colored pupils.

Ruth had lived in Hudson for thirty-two years. In all that time she had not been more than a few miles away. She was now fifty years old, and to go away and leave home behind seemed like leaving the earth for another world.

She hesitated about accepting, and really questioned her own ability to do the work successfully, and further than this she half felt that this rich Mrs. Brydges was endeavoring to do good by indirection in putting forth the invitation; and, of all things, she shrank from being a dependent.

Ruth resolved to stay in Hudson and fight it out—live down the disgrace; and, if possible, gradually win the town over to her way of thinking. This she would do by the integrity of her life: and through love and gentleness she believed that the harshness and the prejudice would melt away.

So she wrote to Mrs. Brydges thanking her for her kind offer of a home and a position as teacher, and telling her that much as she sympathized with the mission of giving education to colored people and whites alike, yet she felt her duty lay in Hudson. She directed and sealed the letter and took it down to the post-office. After posting the missive and making a few small purchases, she started back towards John Brown's.

Some noisy children making mud pies in the street

called after her; the cry was taken up by a bigger boy on the sidewalk, and as she hastened her walk the urchins in the street followed her, shouting, " Nigger stealer! Nigger stealer! " She suddenly grew nervous and started to run, when a stone went whizzing past her head.

Just then the mother of one of the youngsters appeared on the scene, and grabbing her own particular hopeful, cuffed his ears vigorously as punishment for his insolence, and at this the embryo mob suddenly scattered.

But the deed was done—the die was cast!

Hudson was no longer home to Ruth Crosby. She packed up a few necessary articles and the stage that went southward the following day carrying a letter for Mrs. Margaret Brydges at Cincinnati, also carried the woman who wrote it.

CHAPTER IX

RESULTS OF MIXING SENTIMENT AND BUSINESS

WHEN a man concentrates all of his energies on one business he may succeed and he may not. If he divides his time and talent among several enterprises, his chances of success are much lessened; yet if he has a single eye for " number one," he still may arrive.

But should he allow religion, politics, philanthropy, love of art to creep into his waking hours, so as to become a passion, his financial doom is sealed.

When John Brown took philanthropy into his life, he signed an application for bankruptcy. His time was now divided between thoughts of Margaret, education of black people and business. Business is a jealous god, and says to its votary, " Thou shalt have no other gods before

inc." So commerce was wroth with John Brown and fortune ceased to smile upon him.

He had lost favor with his neighbors; and many people who owed him, no longer thought it necessary to pay. Some of these people had borrowed funds from him. And all those whom he owed wanted their money at once. Had he been able to pay, his creditors would not have cared for the money, but now they refused to accept notes, where such obligations were always before accepted in settlement.

Two years before Brown had signed security for a friend—just a matter of form, you know. The holder of the note now demanded immediate payment from the endorser. The amount was twelve hundred dollars—not much in our time, but a large sum then for a country merchant to meet off-hand. Brown could not pay it, and the sheriff appeared with many apologies and a writ of attachment against the tannery.

Then the small creditors became frantic for their money; and the debtors increased in indifference according to the square of the difficulties into which their creditor was plunged.

A singleness of purpose is the prime requisite in commerce—the whole structure is founded on selfishness; and had Brown been willing to avail himself of a technicality and repudiate the claim of twelve hundred dollars, he could have pulled through. But he scorned any action that savored of duplicity—he had agreed to pay this amount if his friend did not, and he would do it.

Besides this, there were other schemes and other ambitions in his head. By nature he was a pioneer; he loved the wildness of the woods, and the sense of power that comes to all men who are able to cope with untamed nature, was to him a delight.

Civilization hates individuality. Its desire and tendency is to iron men out to one common level. It prescribes and proscribes; it limits and sets bounds; and it has ever been ready to apply the thumb-screws to him who will not conform to its edicts. For the man ahead of his time, civilization has the rack. Society had said to John Brown: "Be one of us, conform to our ways, accept our opinions, do as we do, and we will hold fellowship with you; but if you persist in being better or worse than your neighbors, we will scourge and spit upon you."

Brown heard the voice—it spoke in no uncertain tone. He longed for the solitude of the forest, and the sufficing majesty of the mountains. As wounded animals go away to the woods to be healed (or to die), and as the Indian woman feeling the pains of approaching childbirth hides away under the friendly boughs, so do stricken souls turn to Nature.

But there was a trinity of powers brought to bear on Brown, all counseling a move. There was the restless spirit of the pioneer; the two penny persecution by neighbors; and the desire to be in a place where he could shelter fleeing slaves, and teach them to read and write and worship God.

Where to go? that was the question. Emigration was pushing through to the West, and to go to the frontier would be out of line of communication with Cincinnati. But Pennsylvania was not far away—Pennsylvania with its rich valleys, its dense forests and mountain fastnesses.

An arrangement was entered into with the creditors whereby Brown gave over into their hands the tannery, store, residence and farm. He was allowed to keep his live stock and three hundred dollars in money. With his two oldest sons he counted the sheep—there were

nearly four hundred of them, forty head of cattle and a dozen horses. The subject was laid before his wife and children. Youngsters always want to move and Mrs. Brown was sick and weary from the trouble that had come to them. They were all eager and hungry to get away.

There were nine children in the family. As they are to play important parts in our story, their names in order of ages are given here: John, Jr., Jason, Owen, Ruth, Frederick, Sarah, Watson, Salmon and Oliver. The first five on the list were children of Dianthe Lusk.

They were a healthy, rollicking lot of youngsters as one ever saw; wild young barbarians all, as children should be, for the first requisite in the making of a man is that he should be a good animal.

John, Jr., was seventeen and Oliver was less than a year old. It was certainly a brood to be proud of, and like the Roman mother of old, John and Mary Brown counted their children as jewels. So they were rich, and why not? Is a man poor with all these flocks and herds, these wagon loads of household goods, and, besides that, a loyal wife and nine hearty children? Far from it; the Browns were happy now and rich. They had everything that they needed and they were going away to find breathing room.

Joy is seldom found pure except in times of transition. These were joyous moments.

And yet it was a little come-down from Deacon and general First Citizen of the town, to an emigrant who had been turned out of the church and whose exodus caused no regret. Then as to the children, a captious observer might have noted that none had the clear-cut facial lines of their father—they lacked his individuality.

But they were a happy lot as they moved away from

Hudson that fine September day, driving their flocks and herds before them.

The father had cautioned the boys to restrain their glee, but he had hard work to keep down the cheers, and as they passed by houses where objectionable neighbors lived, John, Jr., and Jason sent stones flying as a last good-bye, and Owen even offered to fight certain boys who sat on the fence watching the procession. Once well away from the village the father called a halt. He gathered the family together, read a chapter of Scripture and then prayed to God to bless them in the new undertaking; a hymn was sung, and then they moved forward — eagerly, merrily, hopefully forward. All of their troubles lay behind.

BOOK IV

CHAPTER I

KANSAS IN THE FIFTIES

EASTERN Kansas is as fair a land as ever the sun looked down upon. It has splendid sweeps of rolling land that need but to be tickled with a plow to laugh with a harvest; and across these rich prairies are streams whose banks are lined with beautiful groves that gladden the heart of the traveler.

The diversity of treeless plain and wooded slope, of open space and running stream, of protecting hill and sunny outlook, was first a paradise for the hunter, and then a refuge and delight to the stock raiser and agriculturist.

In 1854, when the United States Government opened up the Territory for settlement, there was an instant rush of immigrants. Any citizen could pre-empt one hundred and sixty acres of land, and by living on it a certain length of time and making certain improvements, he was given a full title to his homestead.

From the Northern States came the "prairie schooners" of New Englanders and their hardy sons who had settled in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana, or Illinois, now pushing on to this new Eldorado.

And from across the sister State of Missouri poured another tide of restless wealth seekers from the South.

For the first time in the history of our country Jamestown and Plymouth Rock came into serious collision.

Differing in temperament, differing in religion, differing in taste and tradition, each with virtues that the other did not appreciate and faults that the other could not understand,—is it any wonder that they clashed? Besides all this, those were times of mad rivalry; everyone desired to secure the best place and the man who first drove down his stakes was the man who owned the land. Under such conditions, of course, disputes would occur. Two men might claim the same corner of God's earth and there would have to be much readjusting and patient endurance or else—fight.

It is needless to say that when disputes occurred between Yankee and Southron, South sided with South and North with North. Yet even then all might have simmered down, and the young Romeos married the fair Juliets and peace and plenty come to the houses of Montague and Capulet, were it not for slavery.

Slave labor and free cannot exist side by side and each retain its individuality. The free labor becomes enervated or the slave restless and discontented. Furthermore, there was a vast political question at issue—it was whether Kansas should send to Washington representatives who would champion the Southern cause or whether should they be men with Yankee proclivities.

In October, 1854, four sons of John Brown moved to Kansas, and took up claims ten miles from the village of Osawatomie. John, Jr., and Jason were married; Owen and Frederick bachelors; but Frederick had a sweetheart in the East whom he expected to send for.

Each of these four men had one hundred and sixty acres of land; that is, they owned just a section, or a square mile between them. Where the four corners of their claims came together they built four log houses. Three of these houses were small, with dirt roofs—a bare

shelter from the storm—the other was quite a respectable edifice as log houses go.

Owen established a store and post-office, and they called their embryo city Brownsville. Running through their land was a beautiful stream and near at hand was plenty of wood. They had a few sheep, a dozen head of cattle, and as many horses.

They were happy, were these pioneers, happy and full of hope. All that winter they worked, building their houses and barns. Sundays Yankee neighbors would come from miles away and they would hold "meetin'" and make the rafters ring with sounds of praise. Game was plentiful; for while the buffaloes had pushed on to the West, deer, wild turkeys, prairie chickens and water fowl were to be had in abundance. So they feasted, and worked and sang; and when a fifth brother, Salmon, came on a few months later, they had much to relate in way of harmless adventure and amusing incident.

These Browns were not rich, but they had enough so that they could live comfortably until a crop could be produced. They brought with them garden, farm and flower seeds, grape vines and several hundred fruit trees; and the last of February had scarcely melted the winter's snow before they were planting their orchards. On March 30th, an election was to occur at which representatives were to be chosen for the Territorial Legislature. There was much feeling on the subject of whether Kansas should be a slave State or not, and at this election the matter would be practically decided.

The Browns were too busy attending to their farming to take a very active interest in the matter, but when travelers came to their cabins from time to time, they expressed themselves vigorously upon the subject. The New England spirit was strong in their veins; town

meetin' day with the right of a freeman's franchise was the most glorious day in the year; and early in the morning of the 30th day of March, the five Brown brothers started afoot for the polling place ten miles away.

On every little knoll the prairie chickens drummed and strutted, great flocks of plover went whirring past, and at all the ponds were green-head ducks and dancing cranes. Here and there across the prairie could be seen the curling smoke rising from some settler's cabin and at long intervals teams were plowing straight furrows across the virgin sod. The blackness of the burnt grass was giving way to greenest green; and to men raised in a country that could only be farmed after a long, painful cutting down of trees, pulling out of stumps, and piling up of stones, this beautiful land seemed an Eden indeed.

The five stalwart brothers whistled and sang and shouted as they walked. The bright sunshine magnified objects across the rolling mounds and played strange tricks with visual senses. Houses miles away could be seen turned upside down against the horizon and for several minutes there was a vision suspended in mid-air of a great mob of men on horseback and in wagons miles and miles away. Even the tropical seas cannot compete with a sun-lit plain in optical illusions.

At several cabins they were joined by other men, also going to vote. All were walking, for horses must be saved for the plow. In two hours there was a full dozen men in the party.

"Hello!" suddenly cried Jason Brown, "why, here 's old man Blanton, he should be at the polls, for he showed me only yesterday his certificate as Judge of Election, signed by Governor Reeder."

A buckboard drawn by an old white horse was just

coming up out of the little valley that wound around a low hummock.

“ What ’s this, neighbor Blanton, are we off in our date—we thought it was ’lection day ? ”

“ And so ’t is, gentlemen, but you ’d better go back ? ”

“ Why ? ”

“ Why ? What a question ! Is it possible you have n’t heard ? Every ravine for twenty-five miles has been filled for two days with Missourians, and they are votin’. Go back, for if they know you are Anti-Slavery men your lives won’t be safe—lots of them are fighting drunk ! ”

“ But you are a Judge of Election—did you accept their votes ? ”

“ Did I ? No, that ’s the trouble. When I refused, they put in a man of their own, and I ’ve barely escaped with my life. Go back, or there ’ll be bloodshed ! ”

“ We ’re not the kind that go back ! ” shouted Owen Brown, “ forward march, boys ! ” And forward they went.

Another half mile brought them to a ridge, whence they could look across at the little settlement two miles away. A dozen huts looking like dolls’ houses dotted the plain ; one straight white steeple pointed to the zenith, and a little to one side the polling place could be plainly noted. Around it was a dark moving blot of black on the green of the prairie. As they approached this dark blot, it turned to rusty gray and separated into parts ; and horses, wagons, and men stood out plainly.

From several of the wagons flags and banners were flying. One of the flag-poles was ornamented with a long string of waving hemp, another had a white flag with a skull and crossbones rudely daubed upon it. A whiskey keg upside down was carried on another pole.

The Browns noticed with a little alarm that these men

were armed with knives, scythes on poles, pitchforks, and guns of every period of antiquity.

They were evidently organized, for there was a commissary wagon in charge of a sober man, while everybody else seemed to be rearing-tearing drunk.

"Here they come! here they come, all good honest Pros, every one," shouted a blatant Missourian. On his black slouch hat was fastened a bunch of hemp and over his shoulder was a double-barreled shotgun.

"Whiskey first, then vote. It 's a matter of conscience—no man needs to keep slaves if he don't want, but he shall not deny the privilege to anyone else—whoop!"

The newcomers were cheered and offered whiskey and hardtack. Around the shanty was a dense crowd, and Owen soon saw that if his party voted the "Pro" ticket they would be allowed to get through to the window to cast their ballots, but if they attempted to vote "Anti" there would be trouble. The Yankees scattered through the crowd and Jason picked out a Pro who was talkative, and who had not been drinking so long that he was ill-natured.

"You 're a settler here, I s'pose," remarked Jason.

"Hell, no, I 'm from Mizzooory!"

"All your crowd from over the line?"

"Wall, I reckon—a dollar a day with lickor and grub haint so bad!"

"No, indeed."

"We 'll vote the dam Yanks to hell and then fight 'em, or we 'll fight 'em and vote arterwards—two hundred of us here—two comp'nies—there 's a comp'ny at every votin' place in Kansas, an' if that 's not nuff we vote at two places! whoop la! No free niggers in ourn—free whiskey 's the only thing for we!"

A horseman in semi-uniform came galloping across the prairie and handed a message to the captain of one of the companies. It was an order that more voters were needed at Ballou, twelve miles away. An order was given for one of the companies to go. The men tumbled pell-mell into wagons and onto the horses, and with wild cheers and yells, they drove away followed by their four-horse commissary wagon.

Jason and Owen quickly consulted and thought this a good time to vote. They got their little company together, gave each man an Anti-Slavery ballot and began pushing up to the polling window.

"Less see your ballots, boys. I 'm here to see that all is done on the squar!" said a big fellow in butternut. Evidently this man was a joker, for the crowd laughed at his sally.

"I 'm commissioned by Congress to see that only honest men vote—show up the paper, pardner."

"I show my ballot to nobody," replied Jason firmly.

The man jostled against Owen and began crowding him out of the line, others crowded against him and the man in butternut swore at them roundly, ordering them back, yelling, "Quit your pushin', you dam galoots!"

And the more cries of "quit pushin'" were uttered, the more pushing was done.

In five minutes the little company of a dozen men were pushed clear past the building. They stood well together, though, and began now to crowd back. Backward and forward they surged, and gradually they were allowed to work their way up to the building. They reached it, but they were on the wrong side from the window; in the scramble they had lost their bearings. A big laugh went up at their expense, as the mob watched their discomfiture.

"We are actual settlers, all of us, we are Anti-Slavery men, and we are going to vote!" shouted Jason.

"Hear him—just as if anyone had interfered!" answered the big man.

"You have interfered—you are armed and we are not, yet my brother, here, only a boy, can whip you in a fair fight—will you fight him, Salmon?"

"I guess I will," answered Salmon, as he shed his coat.

The crowd fell back. This sudden move had surprised them. There was a brief lull in the yells, and then the crowd called on the big man to go in and kill the Yank. There was no backing out—the big joker must fight or stand convicted of cowardice.

He blanched perceptibly, hesitated, pulled at his dirty yellow beard, sighed, and slipped his coat. A ring was made, and it looked as if the tall, slender lad of nineteen had more than met his match in the big Missourian.

The big man made a rush like a mad bull. Salmon stepped lightly aside, but as the fellow turned to come back he got a stinging blow in the ear; his hands dropped, and before he could guard, Salmon gave him a swinging left-handed blow on the nose which sent him stumbling face to earth.

The crowd rushed forward with roars of "Kill the dam Yanks, kill 'em!" but quicker than thought a full half-dozen of the Pros stretched their lengths on the grass with blood starting from their noses, eyes and ears.

All men who go armed have a wholesome dread of a brawny fist. To get knocked down means a jar that is a headache for a week, a black eye for a month, and disgrace forever.

The crowd fell back, but the cries of "Kill 'em, hang 'em, hang the Yanks" increased, as the little group of unarmed men stood backed up against the shanty. Guns

were fired in the air, and the threat to kill them might have been carried out, had not a little, light-haired man sprang out of the covered commissary wagon with a pistol in each hand. He slipped through the mob and in a twinkling stood with the Yankees.

"Keep back, gentlemen, I'll plug the first man that touches these men! Open up there, and let them out!"

"But we have n't voted," said Jason.

"Good God, what of it! These men are drunk. I can only hold 'em off for a minute—you must go now, please go now—they will kill you all—one taste of blood and they snuff you out. Go!"

The little man's pistols looked out straight in front and the crowd parted. He walked out and the Yankees followed. In a minute they were outside of the ring and a hundred feet from the polling place.

"Git, now!" shouted the little man, and he fired one of his pistols in the air.

Whether it was a case of hypnotic suggestion is not for us to say. But the Yankees, now thoroughly frightened when the worst danger was over, broke into a run. It was a race for life, although nothing worse than yells, curses, and loud laughter followed them, backed up with a few random shots. It was a complete panic—a rout.

When the five worthy Browns reached Brownsville, they were tired, worn and hungry. They had started hopeful, gay and buoyant; they returned dishevelled, dejected and undone. The two women came out to meet them, each carrying a baby, and sundry little Browns, sucking their thumbs, tugged at their skirts. Gracious, womanly women that they were, they smiled a greeting to their husbands and brothers.

"How I wish I could vote"—called Wealthy, "yet I know the Anti-Slaveries will win, now won't they?"

“ I did n’t vote—I ’m not twenty-one yet, you know!” said Salmon.

CHAPTER II

POLITICS AND STRIFE

ONE month before the election Governor Reeder had caused a census to be taken, and the actual number of voters in the Territory was found to be 2905. At the election 6113 votes were cast; 1400 of these were Anti-Slavery. But before the news reached the Browns other exciting events had occurred.

The big man whom Salmon had so punished, proved to be one Scott Carver, or “ Cap ” Carver, as he was called, a man of some property and considerable influence. His ranch was just across the Missouri River, thirty-five miles east from Brownsville. The place was a general rendezvous for all the ruffians and rogues in that section.

When Captain Carver returned to his home that night after election, he drove off, with the help of his friends, fourteen head of cattle that belonged to the Browns, as salve for his broken nose and wounded feelings. In the morning the Browns discovered that their choice blooded stock, brought clear from Ohio, were gone. It was not difficult to follow the trail across the prairie. Owen and John tracked the drove straight to “ Cap ” Carver’s ranch and there at sundown found the cattle mixed in a herd of several hundred others.

They demanded their property. Carver declared that he had bought the cattle in Illinois, and that he himself had never been in Kansas at all. There was a full score of men around the place, and they intimated that if the

two visitors did not get back to the other side of the river and stay there, it might go hard with them. The Browns returned home and invoked the law. But the sheriff and county judge claimed that they had no jurisdiction in Missouri. It was practically a foreign country and extradition was a thing entirely unheard of.

Then the Browns tried to organize a posse to go over and forcibly take possession of their own, but the difficulty of cutting out fourteen head of cattle from a herd of two hundred, and making a fight against odds, was too great for the neighbors to think of. More than that, the Devons had probably been driven further away by this time. So spring opened, and the Brown babies had no milk, and coffee was drunk with sugar only.

Plowing was begun and crops of corn, wheat and oats planted.

The fact that the Territory had gone in favor of slavery by a big majority did not banish the sunshine and spring showers; the grain was growing, the flowers blooming, and the vegetables in the garden were a delight to the eyes of the women. Yet the men had not forgotten that their votes had not been counted at the last election, and the thought that the same scene would probably be played over again in the fall was galling in the extreme.

In June, John, Jr., and Jason made a trip to Lawrence for supplies. Lawrence was the State capital, and while there the Browns made a plea to the Governor, asking for help in getting their cattle back. The Governor treated them with great courtesy, was very sorry indeed; he would look into the matter personally and would write Captain Carver to return the stock. The cattle must have been taken accidentally — stock was continually straying away, and Captain Carver's herdsmen had only made a mistake.

The Browns saw that they had small hope from this direction, so they talked with others and talked freely. On the subject of slavery they expressed themselves plainly, and tried to get a promise from various citizens that if, at the November election, the ruffians from Missouri returned, they would fight.

In fact, they made a canvass of the town and got the promise of over a hundred men that they would not stand idly by and see their State overrun by a lawless element. An effort had already been made to organize militia companies, and from the encouragement they received, they felt sure that the disgraceful scenes of the previous March would not be repeated.

Enthusiasm soon fans itself into a glow; it is so much pleasanter to agree with an enthusiastic man than to dispute him, that easy converts are made.

On the way home the Browns called at every settler's cabin and only one theme was discussed. Very little opposition was made to their plan, which was just this and nothing more: the actual settlers of Kansas must arm themselves, organize and repel any invasion that might occur on election day. A good bold stand, once for all, would do the business.

All they talked with agreed to this; some were a bit lukewarm; two or three had never heard that Missourians had marched over and voted illegally—was it not a mistake? But, of course, only residents of Kansas should vote—they promised to use their influence on the side of right.

The two men reached home with their wagon-load of provisions. Besides provisions they brought powder and lead for melting up into bullets; and besides the powder and lead they brought glowing news of how everywhere men were arming, and of how in November a fair election would be held.

Even the women caught the enthusiasm, and at odd times the next day Jason's wife molded bullets as she sang a lullaby to her babe.

On the third night after the travelers had returned a rap was heard at the door of the long log house where John and Jason lived with their families.

"Who 's there?" called John.

"We 're movers and my wife here is sick — can't you take us in till morning?"

John got up, unbarred the door, and—looked into the muzzle of a double-barreled shotgun.

"Stand still, or I 'll blow you to hell!" said a hoarse voice. The shotgun was held straight at his breast as four other men pushed into the house. They flashed a dark lantern on the row of bunks and threatened to kill the first person that moved.

"We won't hurt you if you 're decent, we want nothin' but your guns and ammunition," said the spokesman of the party.

John hesitated.

"Tell us quick — we want no foolin' — your wimmen won't be safe a minute if I whistle twice!"

John pointed to a chest and to the guns in the corner.

Two of the ruffians carried out the chest, and another took the guns. They then backed out of the door, after threatening to kill the first person who appeared outside.

Soon there was a firing and the "phit, phit" of bullets could be heard as they struck against the house. When the firing ceased the rumble of a wagon could be heard. John shoved open the sliding window and in the bright moonlight could see a wagon and a dozen horsemen disappearing across the prairie.

Jason was up and dressed by this time. He ran across to awaken Salmon and Frederick who slept in the shanty

opposite. It was not necessary; they were already very wide awake. They had the same tale to tell as he, and Owen the same. Doubtless they had all been awakened at the same moment. Only their guns, pistols and ammunition were taken. The whole plot had been carefully planned and carried out without a hitch. All the marauders wore black masks, and they had talked but little.

Jason, Frederick, and Owen at once started for Lawrence to report the affair to the Governor and secure more arms. On the way they found that several other well-known settlers had been served in the same way.

The Governor received them kindly. He was very sorry to hear how they had been treated; he would investigate the matter personally and see what could be done. He had no authority to supply them more arms: there was no precedent for such action, but, of course, they could buy guns if they chose.

But they had no money.

They used their last dime to buy paper, an envelope and a postage stamp. They wrote to their father telling him of what had happened and asking him to send them arms so that they could protect themselves.

Then they hitched up their horse to the wagon and started for home.

They had been gone three days, and the tidings they brought were not inspiring. But it was nothing to what the Browns of Brownsville had to tell them.

The night they went away, every horse the brothers owned (save the one they drove) had been stolen.

CHAPTER III

CAUGHT IN A TRAP !

“**H**ERE we are—like pigs in a sty—we can’t fight, for we have no arms—”

“ But I ’ll tell you what we can do ! ”

“ What is it, then ? ”

“ Starve ! ”

This one word seemed to rumble through the long low room of the log cabin like a grim spirit of evil. It put a quietus on further discussion, and the group of five men and two women sat there in silence. Outside in every direction stretched the blackness of the plain over which the prairie fires had so recently run.

The sun had gone down and twilight seemed to come up out of the earth with the night dews. It was the last of September and the scudding clouds that flew southward were a fit backing for the V-shaped flocks of wild geese that went screaming before the wind.

Across the little gulch that ran near came the bark of a prairie wolf, and this was soon answered by another only a little way off.

“ There ’s no chickens here—they might as well go ’way,” said one of the women who sat hand in hand with her husband in the open doorway.

“ Not a feather.”

“ That ’s nothing to the pigs.”

“ But what are pigs to cows when there are babies to feed ? ”

“ And what are cows to horses when there is land to plow ? ”

“ But you have a horse ! ”

“ Surely—and nothing to feed him ! ”

There in one end of the room stood the patient, bony old horse, nibbling at the bark on the branches of cotton-wood that were thrown down in front of him.

"I say we have the horse," repeated the woman, disregarding the man's remark, "and we have the wagon. The wagon will hold a camping outfit, and the children and the rest of us can walk. We are only wasting time here—we must get back to God's country before the snow flies!"

"But you know father wrote us that the arms were on the way!" mildly protested her husband.

"How many times must I hear that? If they had started in July they would have been here a month ago."

"Well, if help does not show up in three days we will sing the doxology and retreat—are all agreed?"

"And all get killed on the way?"

"Pshaw! You know that the ruffians want us to go. If they see we are going they will offer no objections. It is our staying here that aggravates 'em."

"Well, it's getting chilly. Let's be extravagant and start a fire to cheer things up a bit, and we will decide on something and then do it!"

A crackling fire of brushwood was made in the big, mud-chinked fire-place. The dancing gleams of light sent out strange, cavorting shadows among the rafters overhead and filled the room with a luminous glow.

Ranged along the wall was a row of bunks. Piles of soft upland prairie grass, with buffalo robes laid on top, made comfortable beds. In these bunks could be seen various tow-colored heads, and the regular, deep breathing of healthy children could be heard. Tin pans and skillets hung on the wall; across one corner was a cupboard with a calico curtain before it. The only furniture in the house was a long pine table and several hickory

chairs. Stretched across the rafters overhead were strings of dried pumpkin, several pieces of jerked venison, and bunches of catnip and sage.

For a hunter's camp it would have been just right. If there had been a few guns in the corner and these five men there alone, each supplied with a pipe, and one man with heels on a chair, playing an accordeon, the sight would have gladdened our town-weary souls.

But not one of these five men used tobacco, they had no accordeon, and worse — they had no guns. And the presence of the two women and the children and the old horse tied in the corner, gave a semi-tragic setting to the scene.

They were handsome fellows, these five tall, lithe young men, handsome in their ragged raiment, and undismayed in their youthful strength.

“Go on, Jason, read the letter—we ’ll imagine it has just come and that we do not know a word of what it contains.”

The man addressed went to the cupboard in the corner and took out a letter that seemed soiled and worn from much handling. He read :

NORTH ELBA, N. Y., June 26, 1855.

MY DEAR CHILDREN :

Your letter telling of the outrages that have been inflicted upon you by the Pro-Slavery men has been received. I showed the letter to Mr. Gerritt Smith at Syracuse and also to others who are interested in Kansas affairs. They have placed in my hands upward of four hundred dollars to be used in supplying arms whereby you can protect yourselves and your families. I have purchased forty rifles and several thousand rounds of ammunition and will start them forward without delay by two trusty messengers. One of these messengers is your brother Oliver, who, although only sixteen years old, is

very handy with a rifle. The other man I have known some years and I think you can depend on him in case of an emergency.

You have settled on your land in legal manner and complied with all the requirements, and you must not be driven out simply because you prefer to have Kansas a free State. There are enough arms for yourselves and neighbors. These arms are to be used for your self protection, and should any force of men march against you to drive off your stock, or fire your wheat fields and hay stacks, you are to fight.

Your mother and all of the children are quite well and join me in sending love. May God bless you ever, is the prayer of your father.

Yours truly,

JOHN BROWN.

When the letter was finished there was a silence broken only by the neighing of the horse and the snoring of the children.

"If they run off our stock, we are to shoot! Oho, I see!"

"When aside from old Joe we have n't a jack rabbit to call our own."

"And all of the wheat has been burned."

"And so has the hay."

"Now read us what Vice-President David B. Atchison said in his address to the Missourians—you have the clipping, Owen?"

"Yes, I have it, it is such pleasant reading, I did not care to throw it away."

"Read it then, we need something cheerful."

"Well, here she goes:

"The people of Kansas in their first election will decide for themselves whether slavery shall exist there or not. Now if a set of religious fanatics and demagogues a thousand miles

away wish to give their money to abolitionize Kansas, it is your duty to counteract their knavish purpose: you who live but a day's journey from the Territory. If you allow Kansas to be settled by these Puritans, they will run away your slaves and make you continual trouble. We are men of peace, and peace we will have, by God, even if we have to fight for it. Now, Missourians, do your duty, and decide this question. If any fool abolitionist gets in the way, so much the worse for him.' "

The young man ceased to read and again there was a silence.

" Is that all ? " asked Jason after a pause.

" It 's enough, is n't it ? "

" Now, give us that manifesto."

" The Missouri Governor's ? "

" Yes."

" Very well, here it is ":

" ' By consent of the parties, the present contest in Kansas is made the turning point in the destinies of slavery. If the North triumphs, abolitionism will grow more insolent and aggressive, until the utter ruin of the South is accomplished. If the South secures Kansas, she will extend slavery into all territory south of the fortieth parallel to the Rio Grande, and this, of course, will secure the pent-up institution of slavery a proper outlet and make a market for the rapidly increasing number of slaves. It will also restore the power of the South in Congress—giving us the Legislature and Senate. But if the North secures Kansas, the power of the South will gradually diminish, and the slave population will become valueless, for there will be too many slaves to the acre, so to speak. All depends upon prompt action at the present moment.' "

" Now, folks, you know the situation. What shall we do ? " said the elder of the young men.

" We will retreat with honor."

" Yes, with honor, 't is all we have."

" But if the messengers with arms come after we 're gone ? "

" No danger, they have been captured and killed, or else turned back."

" And the post-office—shall we make one more trip to see if there 's any word for us ? "

" It 's too risky, if there were letters for us, 't is n't likely the postmaster would give them to us, anyway."

" Then we are to retreat ? "

" Yes."

" When ? "

" To-morrow night."

" You have heard the motion, all ready for the question: All who favor a Northward retreat under cover of darkness to-morrow night, hold up their hands. Owen, Fred, Wealthy, John, Salmon, in favor, and Ellen won't vote. Women can vote here, sister Ellen, what do you say ? "

" Wait three more days and three nights, and if help does not then come we will go," replied the young woman.

" Now what do you say to the last motion ? "

" What 's the use ! "

" We 've already waited too long ! "

" We 're nearly to the bottom of the meal barrel."

" Well," continued the self-appointed chairman, " whatever we do should be unanimous. Ellen has got four babies and a good level head—she has as much at stake as any of us, let 's follow her advice just this once. On the third night after this we take up the march! Are you agreed ? "

Two women and four men voted a reluctant aye. The old horse in the corner pawed assent and the sleeping babies in the bunks made no protest.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN BROWN TO THE RESCUE

WHEN John Brown received that letter from his sons, asking that he send them weapons, did he comply with their request and send them arms? No, he carried them arms.

Three nights had passed to the anxious watchers since they had made their resolution to depart. They had packed just what was necessary for them to take and no more; the rest of their belongings were to be abandoned. A beacon light had been burned out on the prairie; only wolves and night birds had answered to its friendly gleams, but now on the evening of the fourth night there was a wild tumult of delight, for Oliver and the "trusty messenger" had come.

"But we hardly expected you?" said Ellen, as she seated the old man in a chair and they all crowded around him.

"You only said you'd send 'a trustworthy messenger!'"

"And why not, pray?"

"And who is so trustworthy as he?" called Jason.

The children crowded around their grandfather, and he held a whole armful on his knee, while several who could not reach the coveted haven of his arms begged that he would show them the inside of his silver watch, and others still demanded a bear story.

The two women busied themselves getting supper, and talked together in great good-nature; the five brothers went in and out of the house carrying boxes and bundles and bags that had been brought in the one-horse spring wagon. They paused now and then, listening to the jolly voice of Oliver as he stood in the wagon passing out

the load. Oliver was only a boy, barely sixteen, big, strong, and good-natured.

“ You drove from Chicago ? ”

“ Yes, shipped the guns by boat to Chicago—there we bought the horse and wagon, loaded ’er up and made straight for Iowa; then into Nebraska and down here.”

“ Did anyone know that you had a wagon-load of guns ? ”

“ Nary—why should they ? You see the surveying instruments were sticking out behind and people took us for surveyors. We made twenty miles a day—walked all the way to make it easy for the horse — did you see my shotgun ? ”

“ No, where is it ? ”

“ Under the seat there — double-barreled, stub and twist. We feasted on prairie chickens the whole way. You oughter see me drop ’em on the wing.”

“ When did you leave Chicago ? ”

“ Oh, two months ago. You see father had to skirmish around for money—Sharpe’s rifles cost like tarnation ! Mrs. Brydges sent him two hundred dollars, Gerritt Smith a hundred, and half a dozen other folks fifty apiece. Oh, I tell you the North is with us. Kansas is the battle ground, they say, and if we carry the Territory Anti it just means death to Slavery. That ’s what Frederick Douglass says, anyway—he was at our house for a week—he ’s a darkey himself and oughter know if anybody does. Carry that powder a little careful, Salmon—what in the mischief ! You aint taking our horse in the house, are you ? ”

“ Well, I guess so; horses aint safe outside, here.”

“ Goodness me, what nice neighbors you ’ve got, for sure ! I must show you how to shoot a Sharpe’s rifle to-morrow ! ”

And all this time old John Brown sat before the fireplace with four babies on his knee and three on the floor at his feet, telling them bear stories.

It 's been quite a while since we saw him last—nearly twenty years. Time has not been o'er gentle with him, for although he is now only fifty-five years of age, he looks sixty or more. He seems thinner; his smooth-shaven face is brown and bronzed, and the strong jaw and sharp chin stand out in bony outline. The dark blue eyes—wide set—have not lost their lustre, nor has the stiff bristling hair grown thin, but it has turned to iron gray. The strong face is seamed and scarred by life's rough weather.

"Supper 's ready," calls Wealthy. "Here, let me take the baby!"

But the baby clings to grandfather's neck, and grandfather explains that he has been the father of only twenty babies of his own, and that he knows just how to take care of 'em. As the man arises we perceive that he is not so tall as anyone of the six sons who stand waiting for him to say grace. His shoulders droop, his neck is long, and his lithe form gives him a look of height which he does not possess. He is not over five feet ten; and his weight is under a hundred and fifty pounds, rather than over.

The burdens of life have robbed him of an inch in height; and care, with hard work and manly abstinence, has made him a bundle of bone and wiry sinews. As he sits at the table with the baby on his lap, now and then giving the youngster a bite and talking to the chubby rogue in foolish baby prattle, your heart goes out to him as you look on his strange, sad countenance. Then you see that massive jaw and catch the gleam of those threatening eyes and you draw back—you do not understand him.

This is a disappointed man we see: that is certain. He is in perfect health and, therefore, not nervous, but he has a couchant look at times. The face shows disappointment; it speaks of hopes too high for earth, ambitions unrealized, and aspirations that cannot be gratified this side of the grave.

Failure had followed John Brown for twenty years with dogged steps. In Pennsylvania, wolves, bears, and wild-cats had thinned his pretty flocks of sheep. The dense woods were not adapted for pasturage and he soon saw that to save his sheep he must return them to the open. So with the help of the two oldest boys the herds were driven back to "the Western Reserve."

For a time the sheep prospered in Ohio and large fleeces brought fair prices; but it soon became evident that the mill-owners of the East, to whom the farmers of the Western Reserve sent their wool, did not treat them honestly. In fact, the farmers were being fleeced as well as their flocks.

They held meetings and discussed the question of what was best to do; and it was decided that if they had a responsible agent in the East to whom they could ship, he would see that the wool was properly graded and sold for what it was worth, and the proceeds, less a fair commission, could be returned to them. But who should go?

There seemed to be only one man who had the confidence of the wool-growers in all that section of country, and that was John Brown. Many people did not like him; they thought him stubborn and fanatical, but he knew how to grade wool, he had some education, and he was honest. No one ever doubted his integrity and even his open enemies would have trusted him.

So he sold out his herds and went to Springfield, Mass., to act as agent for the wool-growers. But the

mill-owners did not like John Brown. When they bought wool of him and asked him to put No. 2 wool in No. 1 sacks and label it No. 1, shipping it to certain places for them, he perversely declined to do it. They could not manipulate him, and they soon invented a plan by which they could do without him. They sent agents of their own straight to Brown's clients in Ohio and they represented that John Brown was paying a deal more attention to educating negroes than to selling wool. More than this, he had actually secreted runaway slaves in his warehouse; and on one occasion when officers were close upon the track of a fugitive, the black man had been sewn up in a sack of wool and shipped off by freight.

The worst about these accusations was they were founded on fact; and so plausibly was the plea put forth that John Brown was not trustworthy, that the farmers—ever suspicious—ceased to have faith in him, and sold their wool to those wily agents who paid such good prices for it.

In short, the mill-owners set about to ruin Brown's business, and they succeeded. They had no hazy ventures on hand for assisting fugitives, and were guiltless of any attempt to educate either white or black folks; they attended strictly to their own affairs, and against them Brown, with his limited capital and divided mind, could not compete.

But the restless years had brought Brown into acquaintanceship with some strong men. Abolition instincts took him to Boston occasionally, and there he met a young man by the name of F. B. Sanborn who presented him to Theodore Parker, Wendell Phillips, and Dr. Cabot.

Gerritt Smith had been introduced to him by letter

from Mrs. Brydges, and when it became certain that he would have to give up his business at Springfield, Smith offered to turn over to him a large tract of land in the Adirondack Mountains to be parceled out to colored men. And Brown's business was to show these refugees how to farm and to teach them in various ways.

Very gladly did Brown accept the offer. He moved to North Elba, N. Y., and the old pioneer life that he knew so well was again taken up. There were many discouragements, for the ignorant blacks, used to the soft ways of the cities where they had acted as coachmen, barbers and house servants, could not quickly adapt themselves to the rough, outdoor life of the mountains, and very often they left their would-be helper and returned to voluntary bondage.

John Jr., Jason and Owen had moved back to the Western Reserve and were engaged in farming and stock raising. Part of the time their father was with them, and part of the time he was at North Elba.

And all these years Margaret Brydges held fast to her one idea that the slaves must be made free. She had not only used the income from her fortune, but had encroached on the principal. Her house was a refuge and a school, and Ruth Crosby was her faithful friend and coadjutor. But never once in all these years had John Brown and Margaret met.

So the years went hurrying by — years of constant endeavor, contracting finances, of disappointment, of sorrow and defeat.

But the battle for principle ever has its compensation, and the bond of friendship that held these faithful workers in freedom's cause was of a kind unsullied by any selfish taint. It was a friendship noble and sincere; and the weekly letter from Margaret Brydges to John

Brown was to him a consolation and a solace for all the ills and stings of fortune. As we have already seen, five of John Brown's sons had followed the tide of emigration to Kansas. Difficulty had come to them; they had written to their old poverty-stricken father at North Elba for help. He was poorer than they, yet he had friends who believed in him, and the friends one makes in adversity can always be relied upon.

He made six copies of that appeal from his sons, and sent these six copies to six friends. It was not long before he had arms for fifty men and over a thousand dollars in cash.

Leaving his wife and family of five children at North Elba, he took Oliver, his oldest boy then at home, and started for Kansas.

And now we see him at his destination seated at the supper table with the baby on his knee.

"And so you have no cattle at all?" mused the old man.

"Not a horn!" answered Jason.

"And no horses, I believe you said?"

"Not a hoof, save that one old horse there."

"And you are quite sure that this Carver you have been telling me of is the man who ran them off?"

"Yes, we are sure of it."

"Ah, well, I will go and see Captain Carver tomorrow."

CHAPTER V

A LITTLE MATTER OF DIPLOMACY

WHENEVER two men meet for the first time there is usually a swift, unspoken understanding, and one acknowledges the other master.

Captain Carver was large, stout, good-natured, glib of tongue, sociable, and ready. But now his wit did not seem to fit, his jokes fell flat, and his loud, easy ways were out of keeping. He sat on the porch and tilted nervously on one leg of the chair: "So you are from York State, be you?"

"Yes," said the visitor.

"What part o' York State?"

"The northern."

"Been here long? 'Scuse my askin'."

"I have just arrived. I came purposely to see you."

Then there was a pause. Captain Carver coughed, spat, removed a big chew of tobacco and replaced it with a larger one. He handed the pouch of tobacco towards the visitor, who refused it with a half smile.

"Hem—ah—a' purpose to see me?"

"Yes."

"And where hev I saw you before—your face is familiar!"

"You never saw me before."

"And you said, I b'lieve, that you did not care to—talk about your errand till after dinner."

"That is what I said."

"Wall, the horn has blowed, less go in."

The visitor was a smoothshaven, elderly man. He wore a seedy suit of black and a black stock. He carried a cotton umbrella, and about his neck was a black tape, fastened to a silver watch.

Captain Carver felt strangely uneasy in the presence of this self-contained stranger; he would have liked to throttle him on the spot; he half believed the visitor was a preacher, so he dared not swear; his language had to be curtailed, and was awkward in the extreme. After dinner the guest and host again moved out on the veranda.

"Stranger, you are a perfect gent, but your manner is dam queer—leastways peculiar, that is, see? no 'fense. Now tell me what you want!"

"Have you a room where we can talk together by ourselves?"

"'T aint necessary, is it?"

"Yes."

Carver now evidently thought he had a lunatic to deal with and deemed it best to humor him. He led the way into a little musty parlor and threw open the window. The visitor followed and closed the door.

"My name is Brown. Five of my sons live across the line in Kansas, and as you drove away their cattle, I have come to see about getting them back."

"Who drove away their cattle?"

"You."

"It's a lie."

"Sit down, please, we had better be calm about this matter."

"Did you say I stole those cattle?"

"Yes."

"If you was n't an old man, I'd kill you."

"You need not mind my age!"

Carver sat down, visibly agitated, and very much at a disadvantage in parleying with John Brown.

"Now, you took fourteen head of cattle and twelve head of horses belonging to my sons—"

"You are a liar, and a sneaking, miserable Yankee lawyer—I see through you—now, I'll give you five minutes to climb out o' here!"

"But I'm not going!"

"Then I'll kill you."

"That will prevent my being back on the other side of the river at three o'clock!"

“ What of it, old Yank ? ”

“ Why, if I 'm not back there at three o'clock, my men will come across and hang you ! ”

“ Ha, ha, hang me, will they ! why I 've full twenty men about this ranch, all armed ! ”

“ And if you had twice twenty, my posse could scatter them all, release every slave you have, burn your buildings and hang you beside—all before sundown. ”

“ You say you have to git back by three o'clock ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ Wall, go now ! ”

“ Will you return those cattle and horses you took ? ”

“ Old man, let 's be decent now—'fore God, I 've took no stock from no one. ”

“ But you have thousands of acres of land here. You have hundreds of cattle in these valleys and hills, and you have whole herds of horses. It will be no hardship for you to return this stock ! ”

“ Wall now, Brown—it 's jest possible—jest barely possible that some o' your stock got accidentally mixed with ourn—and if you air sure of it, dead sure, why, as an honest man, I 'm bound to return 'em. Does that satisfy you ? ”

“ That is satisfactory. ”

“ Wall, shake then. ”

So they shook hands. And the free and easy banter of Captain Carver came back.

The two men walked out on the veranda, and the Captain said he supposed there was no need of offering Mr. Brown whiskey and Mr. Brown said there was no need. Then Captain Carver called to a colored man, who was working in the yard and ordered him to saddle a couple of horses.

“ You see, Parson Brown, your stock is all mixed in

and scattered hell-west and crooked ways, so you 'll jest have to pick out what 's handy. Is that all right ? ”

“ Yes, that 's all right.”

“ Now you air a perfect gent—it 's a pleasure to do business with a man like you—we 've all got to give and take a little in this world. Am I right, Elder Brown ? ”

“ Yes, you are surely right.”

They mounted the horses and rode up the valley for two or three miles, followed by three negro boys on mustangs. Brown picked out fourteen head of cattle and twelve horses, and the boys were ordered to cut the stock out from the herd and corral them.

“ You 've got to git back by three, I b'lieve,” said the Captain with a forced smile.

“ Yes.”

“ I would n't have you miss it for a good deal—now, Brown, you really did not think you scared me ? ”

“ No, you are a man not easily frightened ! ”

“ Right you air—put 'er thar.”

They shook hands, as their horses trotted along side by side.

“ And the stock—will you come for 'em ? ”

“ I would like you to deliver the horses and cattle at the grove across the river to-morrow morning at eight o'clock.”

“ Wall, for old 'quaintance sake, I 'll do it. To-morrow at eight ? ”

“ Yes.”

By this time they were back at the house. They dismounted, again shook hands, and the old man took his umbrella and departed ; promising on the other's request to call whenever he happened that way.

The next morning at eight o'clock, Owen and Jason

found the fourteen head of cattle and the twelve horses at the grove, all exactly as promised.

CHAPTER VI

A SHERIFF INTERVIEWED

THERE was a great jubilee when the cattle and horses came trooping back to Brownsville. To be sure, the cattle were not quite so good as the ones that had been lost, but the horses were better. These were all unbroken steeds and there was quite a time taming them, but this only served for sport to the hardy young men.

Plowing was begun at once for fall wheat. Seed and implements and provisions had to be bought, so two of the brothers started for Lawrence, each duly armed with a Sharpe's rifle, two pistols and a dirk. The father insisted that these arms should be carried in plain view "for the moral effect."

The young men were everywhere treated with great respect, and the storekeepers of Lawrence welcomed them as old friends as soon as they saw that there was money to pay for their purchases.

A corral was built of strong poles and every night the stock was driven in and a man placed on watch; a double bar was placed on the door, and loop holes arranged in the house that commanded every direction. But no one came near to molest them.

Politically, the Territory was in the hands of the Pro-Slavery men, for the March election had placed them in power. And wherever the authorities were called upon to decide disputes between two men, if one happened to be a Free-State man, he surely got the worst of it. The threat was continually being made that the Territory

would soon be so hot that no Abolitionist could stay there. Several Free-State men had been arrested on the charge of attending Abolitionist meetings, this act having been made a crime by the bogus legislature. These men had been flogged and ordered to leave the Territory at once; and a good many had complied. It is a noteworthy fact, however, that the men who were thus molested were inoffensive individuals and were always taken at a disadvantage. Life is sweet, and the Missourians, who made up the Sheriff's posse, did not care to run up against men who might kill.

Hearing of these arrests that were being made near him, John Brown wrote a letter to Sheriff Jones, who lived at Westport, Missouri—where he was also post-master—stating that the writer had attended Abolition meetings at Osawatomie, and if his act was against the law, the Sheriff was invited to come out and arrest him.

To this letter, the Sheriff, with a fine sense of humor, replied that if Brown considered himself guilty of breaking the laws he would better come in and give himself up. The Sheriff then added a P. S. to the effect that he had his eye on the Browns and would look after their case later.

Within a week after this Jason was out on the prairie only a mile from home and was fired at by someone secreted in the slough grass. The bullet passed through his hat and he dropped to the ground, which act probably saved his life, for had he started to run, other shots would probably have been fired.

That same day three other Anti-Slavery men in the neighborhood were fired on. Two of these men were killed outright by the unseen foes, but the third man, Charles Dow by name, who was at work in a field, started to run for his wagon which was near. In this wagon

was a Sharpe's rifle, and the assailants doubtless knew the fact; and they knew further that if Dow got that rifle in his hands, he would at once go gunning for them.

So, out of a gully arose one, Franklin Coleman, a well-known Pro-Slavery bully, and he ran with gun in hand to head off Dow. It was a race for life. They were approaching the wagon from nearly opposite directions, but seeing that Dow would reach the wagon first, Coleman raised his shotgun and from only fifty feet away, sent a charge of slugs into the breast of young Dow, who fell dead without a groan.

From a hillock a hundred yards away, Dow's partner, Jacob Branson, witnessed the entire affair.

Dow and Branson lived together, and their house was about twelve miles southeast of Brownsville. It was ten o'clock that night before news of the murder reached the Browns, and then only accidentally, by a herdsman who was looking for stray cattle.

Dow had been a universal favorite among the Anti-Slavery men. He was a young man—barely twenty. He was frank, generous and good-natured to a fault, and his death came to the Browns as a personal sorrow.

"And where is Branson?" asked John Brown of the man who brought the news.

"Why, at home, I s'pose."

"Alone?"

"No, his wife and children are there."

"No one else?"

"No one but the dead man. Branson and his wife carried the corpse to the house, and I saw it there two hours ago, all laid out in his Sunday clothes."

"And you left Branson and his wife there alone?"

"Yes, they are going to bury Dow's body to-morrow."

"But they will never do it."

“ Why ? ”

“ Branson himself will be dead.”

“ What makes you say so ? ”

“ He witnessed this murder—he saw Coleman do the deed, and the murderers cannot afford to let him live. Another thing, the shooting to-day shows that there is an organized effort to drive us out. If we go to Branson’s, we may be in time to save him.”

“ For his wife’s sake, go at once,” exclaimed Ellen.

“ And leave you here ? ” asked Jason.

“ We can fight,” said Ellen, “ we will bar the door, and have a rifle at every port-hole.”

“ No, Jason and John must stay with you and the children—no doubt there are enemies around the house now, watching our movements—the rest of us will go—boys, saddle the horses ! ”

The ranchman who had brought the news, suddenly forgot his stray stock and was in for the adventure.

In ten minutes’ time the six horsemen, each heavily armed, were riding at a smart trot in the direction of Branson’s ranch.

It was the twenty-first of November and the night was dark and cold; a slight drizzling rain was falling. An hour had passed and they were nearing the house. Twinkling lights were seen and soon pistol shots could be heard echoing like small cannon across the silent night.

The men dismounted and leaving the six horses in charge of Oliver, they separated, twenty feet apart, and walked briskly forward.

On approaching the house they found it surrounded by a cordon of mounted men, a full score in number. Salmon cocked his gun and drew a bead on a horseman who stood out against the sky, not fifty yards away. In a whisper he begged his father for permission to shoot,

but he was ordered to put down his gun. Then he wanted to kill the horse—it would create a panic! But no, John Brown would not have it. The five men withdrew into a thicket to consult.

“ Let each one of us pick his man—that will drop five of them, and the rest will likely scamper. Then as they run we can get a few more—it ’s the only way,” said Owen.

“ No, if we shoot, they will kill Branson. It ’s barely possible they only want to arrest him, and scare him thoroughly, then order him out of the country,” said Frederick.

“ I think Fred is right,” said the father. “ We must shed no blood unless it is positively necessary. If they are taking Branson away we will rescue him, and we may get him away alive; but if we begin to shoot now, we spoil our one chance of saving him! ”

“ Fall in! ” came a clear, ringing voice from the house a quarter of a mile away.

The clouds went hurrying across the sky and for an instant the moon shone through a rift. The horsemen had broken their circle and were coming down the slope from the house in a bunch. Their horses were walking, and there was no disorder or hilarity in their movements. This absence of drunkenness convinced old man Brown that it was a Sheriff’s posse, acting under the leadership of a cool head.

“ Lay low, boys, cock your guns, and under no conditions shoot until they do. At the first sign they give of fight, pour in the lead on ’em and kill as many as you can! ”

The place where they crouched was a hazel patch, not ten feet from the roadway, that was here lined on both sides by the low bushes. The approaching horsemen were only a hundred yards away—seventy-five—fifty—

Old man Brown had left his rifle in the bushes and crawled out and lain flat down in the road.

As the gray horse of the leader of the party was almost upon him, he arose like a shadow and called : " Halt ! "

The horses evidently knew the word, for they halted with a jerk, and the gray horse shied as his master attempted to draw a pistol.

" The first man who raises a gun dies—my men are lying all about here, with cocked rifles drawn on you ! "

" What do you want, anyway ? " civilly asked the leader of the party, who had now gotten his horse back into the road.

" Who are you ? " asked Brown.

" Me? I'm Sheriff Jones on official business, and neighbor, I'll tell you, you are doing a mighty serious thing in stopping me—please step aside and let us pass."

" No sir, I do not let you pass — "

" Well, this is funny," laughed the Sheriff, " but what do you want ? are you crazy, or a beggar or what ! What the devil are you doing out at this time of night, anyway ? "

" I am not alone—my men can kill every one of you in ten seconds, if I give the word—here, Salmon, hold your rifle on Mr. Jones, and move out in the road ! "

A tall form arose and the moon sent a gleam of light across the gun barrel that was pointed straight at the breast of Jones.

" Don't shoot ! don't shoot ! " pleaded Jones, in a trembling voice.

" Now, where is Branson ? " demanded John Brown.

" Here I am," came a voice from the center of the group of horsemen.

" Ride forward, Branson."

" I can't—I'm tied and a man is leading my mule."

“ For Christ sake, back there, turn that mule loose and give the brute a kick to send it forward, I am looking down a gun,” groaned Sheriff Jones.

There was a push, a kick, a “ gee-up,” a damn, and forward came the mule.

“ Hold your rifle on Jones, Salmon, and bore him through the heart if a man in the line makes a move.”

Brown took hold of the lariat that was around the mule’s neck and led the animal into the bushes.

“ Hold your bead on him, Salmon! steady, boys, don’t shoot unless they try it first! Now, Jones! Forward-d-d-m-m-march! ! ”

The posse moved forward as one rider. The horses began to trot,—then galloped and soon the sounds that came back on the night-wind told that they had broken into a furious run. Old man Brown put his ear to the ground: the fast receding hoof-beats were a mile away.

CHAPTER VII

THE BAPTISM OF BLOOD

TWO men went back to bring up the horses, and they found Oliver full of taunt because the Sheriff’s posse were allowed to escape whole.

Branson’s feet had been tied under the mule’s belly, and his hands fastened behind his back. The thongs were quickly cut, and the party returned to the house, where the man’s wife was found lying on the floor in a dead faint, the four little children frantic with fear. When the woman recovered her senses and found her husband alive, he seemed to her like one raised from the dead.

Owen’s bachelor experiences had made him an expert

cook, and putting on an apron he proceeded to do the honors. A good fire was soon crackling in the fire-place, and ere long bacon was sizzling in a spider and the coffee pot sputtering.

Salmon set the table and the sly antics that he and Owen indulged in set the hysterical Mrs. Branson into a laughing fit; the children looked on with big, open, wondering eyes, while Mr. Branson forgot the deep red marks about his wrists and smilingly begged everybody "to make themselves to hum."

When this midnight dinner was ready, John Brown offered a solemn prayer, and all sat down. They ate with zest, and the young men were inclined to joke and tell stories; for we never are so gay as after work well done. The sudden change from direst calamity to security also had a peculiarly stimulating effect on the man and his wife; gratitude to their rescuers and joy for their deliverance filled their hearts; they thought not of the morrow.

Bill, the ranchman, made awkward jokes and imitated the pleading voice of Sheriff Jones when he begged, "Don't shoot! don't shoot!"

The meal being over, the hilarious Bill picked up an accordeon and proceeded to do a double shuffle; his clinking spurs on the sanded floor and the squeaky accordeon making music that was not classic but merry withal.

Old man Brown arose and threw open a door that led into an adjoining room. The room was dark, but the clouds having drifted away, the moon was shining full and free through the open window. The pale rays fell on the calm, white face of Charles Dow. There he lay, the stiff hands folded across the breast, where the cold lead of hate had gone home. The music stopped, the dancing ceased, and the dancer gasped, "My God! I forgot."

" I think we 'd better go," said the old man.

" But you will not leave us—don't, oh, please don't! " cried the woman.

" No, you must go, too! Branson, hitch your team to the lumber wagon, you must all go with us. They will be back for you, and there will yet be blood shed—the trouble has just begun. Don't stare so at me, Branson, go hitch up that team—help him, Oliver; you too, Fred."

The cover of the plain pine box was screwed down and the coffin carried out and placed in the wagon.

Strong arms carried the children out, the fire was banked, the lights put out, and the ten-mile march across the prairie begun.

It lacked an hour of daylight when Brownsville was reached.

The watchers were rejoiced to get their own back safe and sound—rejoiced, too, to think that they had accomplished their errand and rescued the imperiled Branson without bloodshed. Even that the dead had been made safe from insult, and brought away to be given a decent burial, was a cause for congratulation.

After the news had been given, and the first greetings were over, the old man sought to repress the excess of exultation.

" But how we made them scamper," said Salmon.

" Gently, my son! The issue is greater than any of you think, and before peace comes, Kansas, if not the entire country, will be baptized with blood! "

"What 's that? "

" Why, look you, my children, all of you; what have we done to-night? We have resisted the power of the State! For the moment, through strategy, we have achieved a small victory, but when men resist the law of the land and appeal to a Higher Law, they must fight,

aye, must fling away their lives if necessary. Will you do that ? ”

“ We will, we will ! ”

The answer came back clear and strong. Enthusiasm was in the air.

“ Yes, my children—it is well that you should realize the situation. The entire country—the world is now looking to Kansas! Shall slavery exist or shall it not ? Kansas must decide. If we make this a Free State there will not be a slave in the United States in five years from to-day. If we are defeated and Kansas remains as it is—a Slave State—the question will sleep for a hundred years. We are doing God’s work, and if we falter now, all the efforts of all men and women who have worked fifty years for emancipation will go for naught ! The whole question is focused right here and it is for us to deal with ! The time is ripe—we have struck the first blow, and now we must fight ! ”

The old man was standing—his voice was raised—his eyes flashed fire : “ We must fight ! ” he repeated.

“ But they have gone—can’t we go back to our work and live in peace,” asked Mrs. Branson.

“ No, we have only frightened a dozen men, and that just for a moment. They started to take your husband and they will do it yet if they can. We have only angered them, and I doubt not at this moment a force of two hundred men is being collected to take him, and also to arrest us who rescued him. This force will be here within twenty-four hours, and we must get in all the Anti-Slavery neighbors and stand by Branson though blood flows like water ! ”

There was no time for further talk. A horseman dashed in to give information that Branson’s house and barn were burning “ and the whole family probably murdered.”

“ Not exactly murdered—here we are, all safe!” remarked Branson, appearing at the door.

“ Thank God, but your house and barn have all gone in smoke.”

“ And not mine alone, evidently!”

Across the prairie in various directions could be seen the dull reflections of fires.

“ You see,” continued the messenger, “ I ’ve never had anything to say on this slavery matter, and the Pros think I ’m with ’em, because I ’m from Tennessee. Sheriff Jones and a posse came to my house last night and said they had been attacked by a hundred Yanks and a prisoner taken away from them after a hard fight. They insisted that I go with ’em and rouse all the Pros in the country; so they sent me and two other fellows off in one direction and I slipped off here to you; messengers have been sent to Missouri for help and they are going to drive all the Free-State men out of the Territory, once for all.”

Old John Brown took this man’s excited statements with a grain of salt. He knew full well that Sheriff Jones would organize a larger posse and would also call on the “ Kansas Militia ” to help him if necessary. This “ Kansas Militia ” was made up of Pro-Slavery men who lived in Kansas and of all the Missourians that could be mustered. The arms and ammunition were supplied at the expense of the Territory—this by order of Governor Shannon who had recently been appointed.

It was now daylight and three of the young men went out to the little grove near by to dig a grave. The women were busy preparing breakfast, and as they worked the old man sat out on a log and sketched with a pencil the words: “ C. Dow—aged 20. Murdered, Nov. 21, 1855,” on a rough oak slab and began carving them

out with a jackknife. And as he bent over the slab his mind was busy, and these were his thoughts:

“ It will not do to secrete this man Branson—he must be brought out boldly—everyone must know that he is in my keeping. The Pros must be invited to take him if they can, and those who wish to enroll themselves on the Lord's side will now have an opportunity to do so! I'll take the man to Lawrence so everyone will understand—this whole affair must now be conducted in daylight, and the people must know where we are on this issue. We stand or fall! ”

Two hours after this, the pine box containing the body of Charles Dow was carried to its last resting-place in the little grove. The old man read a chapter from the Bible, a solemn hymn was sung, a prayer was said, the grave was filled up, mounded, and the oaken slab placed at the head.

The little company returned to the house and began carefully testing their firearms.

All the young men were anxious to take part in the impending fight, and in order to decide who should stay and protect the women and children, lots were cast. Owen and Jason were destined to stay behind. They accepted their lot with rather wry faces.

A week's provisions were packed in one of the wagons and the men, mounted on horseback, moved away across the cheerless plain. They zigzagged this way and that, so as to stop at as many houses as possible. At each place, regardless of whether the settler was a Southron or a Free-State man, there was told the brief story of the murder of Dow, the arrest of Branson and the fact of his rescue. And so they moved on, gathering force as they traveled, and when Lawrence was reached, fully a hundred men guarded the frightened Branson.

The Pro-Slavery capital had been moved from Lawrence to Lecompton, on account of Lawrence being made up largely of Free-State men. There was a rivalry between the two towns, and during the night previous to the advent of the Browns, word had been brought that a plan was on foot to march a force against the town of Lawrence and "wipe it off the face of the earth." This was principally on account of a newspaper published at Lawrence, called the *Herald of Freedom*. The people were thoroughly frightened, the stores were all closed and barricaded, and the hundred and fifty men who made up the town were in doubt whether to fly, fight or make peace with their enemies by agreeing to cease all Anti-Slavery agitation.

The first effect of the advent of John Brown's company was one of great rejoicing—here was a body of men who could and would protect them. But the enthusiasm soon turned to fear, and men came to Brown urging him to withdraw at once and take Branson with him, for their presence would surely bring down a mob on the place that would work mad ruin—a drunken, howling mob that would spare neither man, woman nor child.

But old man Brown concluded he would stay. He practically took possession of the place—he called upon the young editor—Holcomb by name, who had brought the town into disrepute and ordered him to get out the "hottest Abolition issue that ever was printed"; and the young editor cheerfully began working paste-pot, shears and pen to that end. All people who did not believe in the Free-State issue were asked to leave. None left, but two men who had made speeches from the hotel veranda, disaffecting the people, were drummed out of town.

Breastworks were thrown up on all sides, cattle driven

inside, and preparations made to withstand a siege. The Pro-Slavery men began to arrive, but they did not attempt to enter town. They came over the Missouri line on foot, in wagons, on horses and mules. They were armed with shotguns, squirrel rifles, pitchforks, knives, and clubs. Evidently they had whiskey, and to spare, for they were noisy in the extreme, but always kept out of range of the Sharpe's rifles at the breastworks. This mob was made up of fully two thousand men. They formed a circle around the town, where two hundred and fifty determined men were corraled.

The officers of the besieging party could not bring their half-drunken men up to the sticking point where they would charge. A charge meant sure and certain death, to a number, at least. The place could only be taken by a determined assault, and as the Missourians would not charge, and to starve the town out might take weeks, or even months, they adopted another scheme.

A messenger was sent into town under flag of truce, with a letter from Sheriff Jones, who now signed himself "General." This letter was to the effect that if Branson and the editor of the seditious newspaper were immediately surrendered, amnesty would be granted to all others and the besieging force withdrawn. But if these "liberal conditions" were not accepted, one-half of the besieging army would remain and the other would proceed to burn and destroy all property belonging to Free-State men in Kansas, and the welfare of the wives and children of all Abolitionists could not be vouched for. With this letter was a personal letter from Governor Shannon to Brown, urging him to accept the terms, as the men could not much longer be restrained.

It was a terrible threat; many of these men penned up there in Lawrence had left their families unpro-

tected, and now a fate might befall them worse than death.

Brown thought of the three women and his own grandchildren out there on the prairie. To be sure, two brave men guarded them, but at night hay could easily be piled against the house and the place fired.

He read the terms of capitulation the second time. He read the threat, and then he wrote a civil letter asking for a personal interview with Governor Shannon.

CHAPTER VIII

DIPLOMACY SUPPLEMENTED BY FORTY-FOUR

GOVERNOR SHANNON was a slave owner and in outspoken sympathy with all things Southern. He was a lawyer by profession, a stump orator of no mean repute, and as unscrupulous a politician as ever wormed himself into office. But the natural cleverness of the man had suffered a partial eclipse through "excessive use of stimulants," as the Life Insurance Companies would say. Yet the tone of authority was in his voice and it was plain that he expected his wishes to be carried out. For when soft diplomacy failed he resorted to a bulldozing manner that had made him a power in the court room, where he not only ruled the jury but often dictated to the judge.

Fully believing that the Yankee forces were ready to give up, he was anxious to go in and add to his laurels by receiving their surrender. Of course, an insignificant force of less than three hundred could not successfully fight two thousand! Yet there might be bloodshed, and to avert this and win without the shot of a gun would be a victory that the entire world must needs applaud.

So reasoned Governor Shannon. He put on a clean shirt and a high, starched collar; he stroked his high, white hat until the fur shone like mica in the clear sunshine; his long, black broadcloth was caught at the waist by a single button, and with one hand thrust into his waistcoat and the other holding a gold-headed cane, he came jauntily across the prairie, followed by a single small negro, tightly dressed in blue, with rows on rows of brass buttons.

Like Goliath he strode forward in full sight of both armies. But unlike Goliath, Governor Shannon was a gentleman—a perfect gentleman. He proposed to show the Pro-Slavery men that “personal presence” was more than a shotgun, and he would teach the Yankees that a true Southern gentleman was neither a coward nor a ruffian.

Old man Brown in rusty jeans stood out on a rampart ready to receive His Excellency. His Excellency made a sign that Brown should approach; Brown did so, and out on the plain before the eyes of all they shook hands.

“You are in charge, I believe, of the—the rebel forces!”

“Yes, I am in charge.”

“And your name?”

“Brown.”

“Ah, now, friend Brown—or Captain Brown, should I say?—Captain Brown, you see the futility of holding out longer. I am glad you are so sensible—we must not shed blood, and you see I have been very patient in not allowing my troops to rush in and overpower you. But now you surrender with honor, shall we conclude arrangements right here in the presence of both armies?”

“I think, Your Excellency, we had better arrange matters in the privacy of a room, where just you and I will be together—we have no writing material here!”

"Very well, I am glad you are not inclined to be quarrelsome!"

The Governor patronizingly took the arm of the old man, and they walked up over the earthworks and along the main street of the village. The Governor bowed to right and left as they walked, lifting his hat to the staring women who stood with babies in their arms, looking on in astonishment.

The two men reached the hotel, walked up the steps, and Brown led the way into a room that had been prepared. The little brass-buttoned nigger, unconscious representative of all the trouble, remained in the hallway. When the two men reached the room, the Governor removed his hat, set his cane in a corner, and sat down at the table where pens and paper were spread out. He began writing and for a minute nothing was heard but the rapid scratching of a pen as it ran in great attorney scratches across, again and again across, the paper.

"What are you writing?" asked Brown, after near a page of foolscap had been covered.

"Don't interrupt me, man—your terms of surrender, of course!"

And scratch, scratch, scratch went the lawyer's pen.

"Had n't we better agree on terms first?"

"I thought we had!"

"Why did you think so?"

"I told you the terms and you made no objection to them—there is an extra item I intend to put in, though!"

"What is it?"

"That every Yankee in Kansas sign an agreement not to discuss slavery in any way, nor interfere, either by word or act, with the institution."

"And you know all the Yankees?"

"I have a list here in my pocket of every Abolitionist

in Kansas—this is a Slave State, and people, who will not conform to our laws, will be gently placed over the border—if nothing worse! ”

“ And beside this——”

“ You must surrender Holcomb, the editor, and Branson, the murderer.”

“ The murderer ? ”

“ Yes, he killed his partner, Charles Dow. My Sheriff arrested Branson, and you rescued him—but I will pardon you, provided you promptly give the men up, and agree to leave the State, or give up all Abolition agitation.”

Scratch, scratch, scratch went the pen.

“ But suppose I reject your terms! ”

“ You will not be so foolish.”

“ Why ? ”

“ Because if you do not accept my terms, one-half of this army that now surrounds you will go burn your barns, ravish your women and kill your children; the other half will stay here and hold you captive.”

“ Governor Shannon! ”

The Governor ceased writing with a start and looked up.

“ Governor Shannon, I refuse your terms!”

“ Very well, then I will go back and tell my men that you refuse to accept pardon.”

“ No, you do not leave this room! ”

Brown stepped to a bureau, opened a drawer, and took out a long, navy revolver. Shannon sank back into his chair, his teeth chattering with fear.

“ What—what—what are you doing!—don’t you know I am here under a flag of truce, that I ’m Governor of Kansas! That I am unarmed! Have you forgotten all rules of war ? ”

“ Yes, Mister Shannon, I have forgotten all rules of

war—when the Governor of Kansas talks of allowing a mob of ruffians to ravish women, and kill children, I forget all rules of warfare. I intend to shoot you through the head with this pistol.”

The click-click of the cocking pistol echoed through the silence.

“ Hold on, for God’s sake, you would not murder me ? ”

“ Yes, I will kill you ! Order your entire mob to go to their homes, or I will kill you, as sure as I stand here ! ”

“ But they will not go ! ”

“ Destroy those sheets you have written, and write as I dictate.”

The sheets were crumpled into balls, tossed aside, and Governor Shannon, at the dictation of John Brown, wrote this message :

LAWRENCE, Nov. 23d, 1855.

TO GENERAL JONES,

Commanding:

Terms of peace fully agreed on. Order every Missourian and every man in your command, to return home at once. Under no conditions must the property of Free-State men be interfered with.

SHANNON,

Governor.

Scratch, scratch, scratch went the pen—the message was duly directed, the small, buttoned negro was called in and told to run with it straight to General Jones. Two men were called in and ordered by John Brown to hold Governor Shannon prisoner.

Old man Brown went down and stood on the earth-works, watching the colored youth carrying the message across to the camp of the enemy. He saw the boy disappear among the tents and wagons.

In five minutes there was a great shout and the whole camp was astir.

“The damn Yanks have accepted our terms—and we are off for home!” arose the shouts. The camp was breaking up, and in half an hour, the Missourians were streaming across towards the East—straight for home, glad that the war was over and that their skins were whole. It was cold and uncomfortable out there, anyway.

“Hurrah for Shannon! hip—hip—hurrah, hip—hip—hurrah! hip—hip—hurrah!!”

But Shannon was still a prisoner. He signed an agreement to recognize all Abolition military companies as Kansas Militia, and he further commissioned “J. Brown” as Captain. He also issued an order to Sheriff Jones, not to interfere with Branson, Holcomb, or any Free-State man on account of any offense that they were supposed to have committed.

A message was sent out with word that Governor Shannon wished to see Sheriff Jones. The Sheriff came in with a single deputy—the rest of his force having departed; but the Sheriff felt fully able to manage Branson and Holcomb, provided that the Yanks did not interfere—and of course they would not, now that they had surrendered.

Sheriff Jones decided he would just handcuff Branson and Holcomb together, and march them off to the jail at Lecompton. He entered the hotel, swinging the bracelets.

The Governor met him in the hallway and handed him his written orders. Jones read the order with staring eyes and said:

“What in hell is this!”

“Don’t swear at me, Jones, God damn you!—have you

no respect for the Governor of Kansas? I've pardoned the men, that's what I have done, and no sneaking cur by the name of Jones can dictate to me—Let's have a drink!"

So they adjourned to the bar-room. But Governor Shannon's gubernatorial dignity did not allow him to make a confidant of a common sheriff—the secrets of State were locked up in his own breast.

In the presence of Jones, he shook hands with old Brown, warning him that in future he must go a little slow, or he would not get off so easy—in fact, he could not promise Executive clemency for any further offenses.

And then Jones was sent out to hire a livery rig, and he and the Governor rode out across the prairie —across the prairie to Lecompton.

Still this did not end the matter.

CHAPTER IX

MASKED PEACE AND SMOTHERED EMBERS

AND so peace, white-winged peace settled down; a fall of snow came and covered the prairies. The settlers busied themselves getting in wood from the groves that lined the ravines; they builded houses and barns, and made ready for the next year's planting.

The Browns had not much to live on now—their cash was entirely gone, but the long slough grass concealed numerous rabbits and prairie chickens, and occasionally a deer was shot. Old John Brown was now known as Captain Brown, and he showed himself a captain in carpentry and house building, as well as in fighting the Lord's battles. Whenever new settlers, for ten miles around, needed assistance, he went with two of his sons

and helped at the building, making all secure against the weather.

Nothing was paid for such service: it was only the neighborly act of man to man, and the kindness that always shows itself where population is sparse and poverty pinches.

Owen and Jason went to Osawatomie and got work by the day, ditching and bridge-building, and this served to get the wherewithal for sundry sacks of meal and beans and sides of salt pork, that were carried on horseback across the prairie to Brownsville.

And so the winter passed in peace, and the V-shaped flocks of wild geese began to come "honking" from the south. The ice broke up in the creeks and little rivulets ran down the gentle slopes, filling the ponds where the wild ducks hovered. On the hillocks the prairie chickens drummed and strutted; from the hazel patches came the whistle of "Bob White," calling for his mate, and great flocks of plover swirled through the sunshine. Sand-hill cranes—blue and white—marshaled their forces out on the sun-kissed plain, placing sentinels that watched intently for any approaching foe.

But with the cranes and the geese, came other immigrants—dozens of white-covered wagons from the north and east bringing Free-State men and their families to people this Garden of the World. And this sight gladdened the heart of Captain Brown—it meant Abolition votes at the next November election. To this election Brown pinned his hopes; if the actual settlers of Kansas could be left free from outside interference, they would settle the question of slavery, for the Free-State settlers outnumbered the Pros three to two. Governor Shannon had made a written agreement to keep in future all Missourians away from the polls; and, although Brown had

not much faith in the pledge, he believed that the settlers would not again allow such a flagrant piece of injustice to occur as that which had placed the Pro-Slavery men in power.

Brown could muster nearly a hundred men in case of emergency, and these could probably repel any force that might come into the immediate vicinity. And if the other districts in Kansas did the same, the State would be secure. So now there was nothing to do but wait—work and wait. He still toiled away at the carpentry, often getting a dollar and a half a day.

The farmers were busy plowing, and from the knolls one could see teams busy in the fields in every direction.

But besides the blackbirds and the geese, and the cranes and the emigrants came other excursionists—a company of armed men from Georgia. They built a blockhouse near Osawatomie, threw up breastworks, and planted cannon. Old man Brown went over to see them. He chewed a straw and asked questions that were answered with half smiles of amusement and contempt. They considered this Yankee a queer old farmer whose bump of curiosity was abnormally developed.

But the old farmer got at the facts, which were these: The troops were duly commissioned as a U. S. force, they were there “to keep the peace,” which meant that they would back up the present Pro-Slavery Territorial Government, and carry out the wishes of Governor Shannon.

Soon there came word that a similar company of men from Alabama, duly armed, uniformed, and commissioned as U. S. troops, were encamped near Lecompton. Governor Shannon was playing a waiting game—he would yet get his revenge.

A grand jury at Lecompton met and found true in-

dictments against Branson, Holcomb, the "Free-State Hotel," and the *Herald of Freedom*.

To indict individuals has been a custom since the days of Cain, but to indict a hotel and a printery was a new departure. Branson and Holcomb were kidnapped as quietly one night as a weasel captures a chicken. They were carried off to the jail at Lecompton.

The next night the "Free-State Hotel" and the printing office were captured by the Sheriff. Both buildings were burned to the ground, and the houses of several leading Abolition citizens were searched for arms, several stores were rifled and goods confiscated on the ground that they were the property of law-breakers.

So quietly, thoroughly, and systematically were these plans carried out that the citizens had no time to defend themselves.

Meantime, Captain Brown was at work in an out-of-the-way spot fifteen miles from home, with Oliver, helping build a house for a newly arrived settler, who was down sick with fever and ague. Fred, Owen, and Salmon were earning a dollar a day and board, bridge-building near Hickory Point.

John, Jr., and Jason were at home farming. They had heard of the arrest of Branson and Holcomb; of the burning and sacking at Lawrence; they had also heard that warrants were out for their own arrest, and that of their father, for rescuing Branson from the Sheriff. They did not know just where their father was working, neither did they know the whereabouts of their brothers; and even if they had they dared not leave their wives and children; so they prayed hard that their father and brothers would soon return, and meantime they prepared for a fight, in case that Jones should pay them a visit.

And Jones came. He came in the daytime, when they

had expected he would only dare attack them by night. Jason was plowing, a half-mile from the house, when off to the north he saw a cloud of dust. Running to a lone hickory tree that stood near, he climbed up until his eyes could command a distance of five miles or more. A party of full fifty horsemen was approaching.

"They are coming, John, the Missourians are coming!"

"Very well, we have been expecting them."

"But there are fifty!"

"But we can fight, too," said Ellen, "I can shoot."

"No, we can only hold out for a few hours before such a force. You must go to the woods."

"Without you?"

"Yes, just you two women and the children."

"And then—"

"Hide in the hazel bushes until night, and then make your way to Osawatomie and give the alarm—we can hold the ruffians off for a day at least! To the woods at once—to the woods!"

Jason helped the women and crying children to the ravine, and down through brush and grass they went for the timber, half a mile to the east. He got back and the brothers barred the door, just as the Missourians appeared over the knoll two hundred yards away. The crack of a Sharpe's rifle brought them to a quick halt. They withdrew a short distance, stopped, conferred, and dividing into two parts, they slowly circled the little clump of houses and barns.

There was much sharp firing, and the balls pattered like hail against the log house, but no flag of distress was sent up.

Darkness came. The firing ceased, and then was begun by the invaders with renewed energy. No balls

struck the house, and had the two men inside been observing carefully, they would have seen that the streaks of light from the rifles of the enemy went nearly straight into the air; the firing was only to divert their attention while hay was being piled against the house.

A little flicker was seen and the firing ceased; then a light crackle was heard. The wind arose. In a minute the flames shot up as high as the roof of the house. The shingles caught, and a crawling line of blaze went creeping up to the ridge pole. The flames quickly spread. The house was doomed.

John and Jason came out of the door, their hands above their heads, in token of surrender.

CHAPTER X

WOMANHOOD AND CHILDHOOD NOT EXEMPT

ACROSS that ten miles of space that separated Osawatomie and Brownsville, the two women made their way. The tired children, bewildered by the unusual experience, made piteous outcry, or else doggedly lay down on the damp ground, and instantly falling sound asleep, declined to be waked, either by coaxing or threats. With full stomachs it is possible that they might have accepted the situation all as a part of life—so easily do the young adapt themselves to environment—but in their fright the mothers had forgotten all thought of food; and hungry children—like hungry men—are rebellious, and ripe for revolution.

Three of the children were Ellen's and four Wealthy's; the eldest one of the flock was six years old. Two were babies that could not walk. So the mothers carried the youngest ahead and laid them down on the ground, and

then went back for the others; and by carrying, dragging, and urging they made progress—slow indeed, but it was progress. And all the time they could hear the echo of rifles and they knew that penned up in the house their husbands were answering shot for shot. Could the men hold out until help came? that was the question. The minutes were precious—it was for these women to give the alarm, and every moment of delay meant just so much longer for John and Jason to hold out against the enemy.

Four miles had been made and the crack of rifles had turned to a faint, dull booming. Still the women toiled and struggled forward, now and again looking back to where lay “home, sweet home,” and then forward to the haven of refuge—yet miles away.

“What is the light we see back there, Ellen?” asked Wealthy.

“Do not ask, sister, it is our home.”

“What, have they fired the house!”

“It must be so!”

“Then our husbands are dead. Oh, why did we not go back and share their fate!”

The woman sank on the ground; and the children, dropping down around her, huddled up close to her body, trying to protect themselves from the chilling night dews.

Ellen took off her shawl and spreading it over the stricken woman and the heap of sleeping children, breathed a quick prayer for their safety and started alone through the darkness towards the town from whence help should come. Off to the north the sky was suffused with a rosy glow.

CHAPTER XI

SURVEYING THE TERRITORY

IT was near nightfall of the next day before Fred, Salmon, and Owen were found by the messenger that had been sent out for them. Their camp had been shifted to a point some miles south, where a new bridge was to be built.

They hastened to Osawatomie and found the two women and children in the hands of kind friends. Wealthy was ill, delirious with fever, and three of the children were also sick, the result of exposure. The townspeople made no effort in the direction of rescuing Jason and John Brown. Why should they? Such outrages were happening all about. Horses were stolen, cattle stampeded, and the barns of Free-State men were being burned: everyone must take care of himself.

The four houses which made the rising city of Brownsville were burned, that was sure—certain citizens of the village had gone out to see. What had become of John and Jason no one knew.

Salmon tried to raise a posse to go in search of his brothers, but to leave home and spend time, provisions and horseflesh on a skirmish of very uncertain result, with no reward but small honors, was not a pleasant undertaking. In fact, the Free-State people were fast losing heart, and they had nearly come to the conclusion that it was well to accept the situation and lock their convictions up in their own breasts.

At daylight the next morning the three brothers started to find their father. When other advice failed and the air was full of doubt and mist, they had ever turned to him, grown men that they were.

Straight out to their old home they rode. They

found the logs that once made their dwelling, still smoldering. But all was burned—houses, barns, sheds. Not one of their horses, not a cow was to be seen; not even a chicken, nor a sheep, nor a pig. All was laid waste and where their promising garden had been three days before, now was only a trampled mass of vegetation, ground into the earth by the tramp of many hoofs.

The sight was too sad to linger over; they turned their horses to the west.

They moved forward over the soft turf in silence, each man too full of his own thought to talk. Riding over a rising knoll, a faint line of rising smoke was seen coming out of a gully a mile away.

"It 's a camp," said Owen. "Either Indians or Missourians. No one who did not wish to hide would camp in such a place—hold my horse and I 'll crawl up to the left through the tall grass and find out what it is."

The men dismounted and Owen skirted the knoll and soon was lost to view in the rank swale. In an hour he came back and reported that he had crawled within fifty yards of the camp. They were armed men with sentinels set—a motley lot and evidently on no good errand.

A ride of eight miles, and a cabin in process of erection was found. Working away, getting the rafters in position for the roof, was their father.

"Is it possible you have not heard the news?" called Salmon.

"Yes, I know the news," answered the old man from his elevated perch.

"And you know that our houses are burned?"

"Yes."

"And stock run off?"

"Yes."

“ And that the women and children are in Osawatomie ? ”

“ Yes, such news travels fast—it was passed on from cabin to cabin and reached me yesterday.”

“ And did you know that John and Jason are dead ? ”

“ They are not dead.”

“ How do you know ? ”

“ Read this letter.”

The old man reached into his bosom and brought forth a piece of brown paper that he dropped fluttering to the ground. The paper was written over both sides with a pencil; and it ran as follows:

LECOMPTON, May 19, 1856.

DEAR FATHER:

The sheriff has John and me on charge of rescuing Branson. They handcuffed us together and drove us like cattle all the forty miles here. The jail is only a wooden building with iron rings in the floor, where the prisoners are chained by the feet. Everybody comes in and stares at us. Yesterday a party of Missourians amused themselves by standing off and spitting tobacco juice in our faces, but Governor Shannon came in the afternoon and ordered that we be given good treatment. He says if we will agree to get out of Kansas and never come back, that he will let us go. John has been out of his head, but is some better now; if we could only hear that the women and children got to Osawatomie safely, I think John would soon get all right.

Do not attempt to rescue us — the whole town here is protected by soldiers. Don't worry about us. There are seven other Free-State men prisoners here, and we all expect to be put over the border into Nebraska with a threat that we shall be killed if we come back. The intent is either to kill, drive out, or silence all Abolitionists. They will kill you if they can, so look out. If you think the odds are too great to fight against, let us all get out of the State soon.

I send this secretly by a boy who offered to carry a message to you; he is a son of a Free-State man.

JASON.

"Well, what 's to be done?" asked Owen of the old man, who had now come down and joined the group.

"Get the roof on this house the first thing."

"And not try to rescue the boys?"

"Not now, you see that 's what the ruffians expect. If we should march our little force on Lecompton now, they would swing in behind and bag us all. Now just stake out your horses and give us a lift here. These people have lived under a wagon long enough; we will finish one job at a time."

"And if we finish this job we will be finished ourselves!"

"Why so?"

"There are at least forty Missourians hiding in Henderson's Gulch!"

"Well, then, we must find what they are about. The section line runs near here, don't it, Salmon?"

"I believe so."

This was an ancient joke and all smiled feebly. The old man was a surveyor and always carried his flags, transit, chain-pins and stakes with him. The instruments diverted suspicion, for only Pro-Slavery men were allowed to do Government surveying.

And so, starting out with Salmon and Oliver in a one-horse wagon, leaving all arms behind, the old man drove within a mile of the gully where the Missourians were camped. Getting the line due east and west, he sighted the transit straight through the enemy's camp. Oliver went ahead and planted the tall red flag. He motioned now right, now left, and finally got the attention of the men in the ditch. Then he moved up nearer and

again set the flag—more waving to right and left, and then more squinting through the transit.

Then the flag was carried up and placed right on the brow of the enemies' camp. Several of the crowd came forward, looked on and tried to be sociable with the young man. He barely explained that he belonged to the United States Government Survey, and that he was sick of the job and wished he was back in Kentucky; then he moved on through the gulch and planted his flag on the opposite crest.

The transit moved on up, and the old man behind it squinted and motioned first with one hand, then the other. Soon he, too, reached the camp, and the loungers found him to be gruff and unsociable, also. He answered their questions in monosyllables, and was too intent on his work to pay much attention to them. He sat down on the ground, and figured and figured in a blank book, and at last he seemed relieved. Evidently the computation came out right, for he thawed out enough to allow a big, hulking fellow to squint through the glass. The man could not see much, but several others tried it, and when the old man took out of his pocket a dark-colored piece of glass and fitted it over the face of the transit and pointed the machine at the sun, the men flocked around and took turns in looking through. They were greatly pleased, and to think that so high an official as a Government Surveyor who got sixty dollars a month should have paid them this deference, was gratifying.

The old man shouldered his instrument and started off, but seeing the little brook that ran through the gulch, he took off his boots and dabbled his feet in the water—so much walking had blistered his feet, he explained.

And as he sat there on the grassy bank, he talked with the men and they talked with him.

"Are you cattle men?" he asked.

"No, no, we are after bigger game than cattle."

"Well, what is it?"

"Why, have n't you heard of how the Yanks are raisin' the devil here?"

"What do I care for the Yanks—I 'm a surveyor."

"Well, they are talking Abolition and getting the slaves restless. They oppose the reg'lar government—up and take pris'ners from the Sheriff and raise particular hell. We 're from Mizzoury and are over here to quietly clean 'em out."

"Won't these Yanks obey the laws?"

"Won't obey nothin'!"

"Well, surely they deserve punishment."

"And they 'll get it, stranger, or else I 'm a liar!"

"There 's an old fellow I 've heard of by the name of Jones who you should look after."

"Brown, stranger, Brown—he 's one of 'em. We grabbed two of his sons, but there is quite a nest of 'em besides the old 'un—we are going to do him straight!"

"Oh, you mean hang him?"

"That 's it, string him up, that is, if we can catch him alive."

"Well, why are you waiting here?"

"Oh, some of the settlers are locating the game for us! We are waitin' so we can do the whole job in one night. When we strike, we 're goin' to hit hard and then git."

"Well, if these Northerners can't obey the laws, of course you 've got to protect yourselves against them."

"Now you 're talkin' sense, stranger."

Brown looked around at the motley crew. They were all armed, and men who in a good cause might fight, and fight hard. Some were mere ragged adventurers, but others were farmers who actually believed that they were

engaged in a good cause. The old man looked them over with mingled contempt and pity.

His glance ran from one to another, and finally his eye rested on a man lying at full length on his stomach about twenty feet away. It was a homely face this man had, it was so homely as to be attractive; beside that, the man was older than most of the others in the party and this would naturally call one's attention to him. The fellow's chin rested on his hands and as he lay there smoking a cob pipe he looked straight out in front at Old Brown; a half-smile was on his face, and his grizzled red whiskers and little sharp eyes gave him a fiendish look.

Brown looked again and gave a start of surprise as the fellow closed one eye in a long wink, looking straight at him with the other.

"Well, boys," said the surveyor, "I 'll have to be going if I make Hickory Point for camp to-night. Good-bye and good luck to you."

"Good-bye, sah, and same to you," said several of the men civilly.

The man with the cob pipe was Jim Slivers.

CHAPTER XII

JIM SLIVERS AND DEATH WITHOUT WARNING

THE little surveying party reached Hickory Point in time to camp, for once out of sight of the Missourians, they made good time. Oliver got the shotgun out from under the wagon-seat and they had broiled prairie chicken for supper.

At nine o'clock in walked our old friend Jim Slivers, whistling "Yankee Doodle."

“ Hungry as a woodchuck—nothin’ but sow-belly an’ pone for two weeks—rogues’ feed it is! Lively now, an’ get an honest man a square meal.”

Oliver stirred up the fire and began broiling the prairie chickens on a spit. Jim Slivers squatted by the fire, and chuckled and chuckled to think what a good joke he had played on John Brown by appearing in this unexpected way. Brown had not seen him for five years and did not suppose that he was within a thousand miles of Kansas.

“ Where ’d I come from ? wait till I pick the bones of this here canary an’ I ’ll tell—from Ohio, where ’d you ’pose.”

“ I know, but what was you doing with those cut-throats ? ”

“ Eatin’ their bacon and finding out what they was goin’ to do ! ”

The years had left their marks on Jim Slivers, but he was still a boy in disposition. He had the negro’s liking for fun and trifling, and nothing pleased him so much as to give an air of mystery to his acts.

“ And where did you join them ? ”

“ At Westport—I came as a roustabout on a river boat, an’ when I got to Westport they was callin’ for volunteers to go over into Kansas an’ clean out the Yanks, an’ so I up an’ ’listed.”

“ And now you ’ve deserted ! ”

“ Have I ? ”

“ It looks like it.”

“ Well, s’pose I had n’t, what would become of you day after to-morrow night ? ”

“ I don’t know—what ? ”

“ Hang you—for sure—hang you and Oliver there and Owen, and the whole caboodle of you, ’sides killing Adair, Morrow, Hines, and Brockett ! ”

“ Why, these are all settlers right around here—Free-State men ! ”

“ I know, they 're all goin' to die day after to-morrow night. Doyle, Sherman, Coleman, Huson, an' Wilkinson are spottin' 'em all, an' are goin' to lead my frens straight to 'em.”

“ That Coleman is the man who shot Dow ! ”

“ Yes, I heard him brag of it.”

“ And were these men at the Missouriians' camp ? ”

“ Yes, Doyle, Sherman, Coleman, Huson, an' Wilkinson—I 've been sayin' the names over to myself 'cause I was afraid I 'd forget 'em.”

“ And supposing I had not run my line through that camp and found you ? ”

“ I knew where you was an' would have found you to-night jest the same ! Oh, I 'most forgot Missus Brydges ; she sent you a letter—it 's sewed up in the linin' of my vest, you 'll have to cut the thing open. An' I 'll jest take a snooze ; I 've been sleepin' with one eye open so long that I 'm nigh done for.”

Jim rolled up in a blanket with feet to the fire ; Owen and Oliver did the same, and the old man read and re-read. It was a long letter and evidently of importance, for it agitated the reader so that sleep was out of the question.

Before daylight he called his three men. A hurried breakfast was prepared and while they ate, the old man explained his plan. It was simply to notify the Free-State men whose lives were threatened, collect as many men as possible, turn the unfinished house into a fort by throwing up earthworks, and then await the coming of the Missouriians.

“ Oh, if we only had the arms that were burned up in our house ! ” moaned Owen.

" I guess they were n't all burned. I buried a full dozen or more guns and all of those short swords in the garden after you left," replied the old man.

" And they are there yet ? "

" I rather guess! "

" We will need the swords if it comes to close quarters! "

" Well, let Oliver and Jim take the wagon and go dig them up, and you and I will go around and quietly notify all the loyal settlers we can find."

So they parted there on the prairie, just as the sun came up out of the great ocean of waving grass that stretched away like a tideless, changeless sea. Jim and Oliver made their way to the blackened ashes that once had been a happy home, and the old man with his stalwart son trudged off through the wild sunflowers that waved in the morning breeze, to tell men that other men intended to murder them.

Jim and Oliver followed the directions given by the old man and found the buried tools of war. Instead of obeying orders and waiting until nightfall, they loaded them at once into the wagon. The swords were of a very ancient pattern and had been given to Brown at Springfield, Mass. They were heavy, short, and double-edged.

Jim took out one and flourished it in the air, making passes and thrusts at an imaginary foe:

" Jeeminy Krismus! but I'd like to get a jab at that man Coleman with this here toothpick! "

* * * * *

Oliver and Jim did not reach Old Man Brown that night, as agreed. Their absence caused much apprehension. It was well towards night of the following day before the white horse hitched to their wagon was seen coming at a weary trot across the prairie.

“ We have just heard frightful news,” exclaimed Fred to Oliver, as the wagon stopped and the young man stepped out on the ground.

“ What is it ? ” asked Oliver.

“ Last night someone went to the houses of Doyle and Sherman and several other Pro-Slavery men, and calling them out, killed them with axes or scythes or something— ”

“ Went from house to house ? ” asked Jim.

“ Yes.”

“ And called ’em out, you say ? ”

“ Yes, on pretense of having a friendly message of some sort ! ”

“ And when they showed up in the doorway, they got slashed ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, we are the men who done the business ! ” said Jim Slivers. “ One night more an’ they would have slashed you ; we took time by the forelock, an’ killed five of ’em without the pop of a gun—Is supper ready ? ”

CHAPTER XIII

THE SOIL OF KANSAS FERTILIZED BY BLOOD

NO attack was made by the Missourians that night. The men who were to pilot them to victory were dead ; a frightful, sudden death had come to them, a death without warning, or time for preparation or parley.

Messages had been going back and forth from these men to the Missourians’ camp, and so the summons at the door was answered without thought of harm. In fact,

the Southrons up to this time had not been molested; on the part of the Free-State men, the war had been purely on the defensive.

It was a terrible blow that had been struck—a frightful, savage blow. It came in the night-time, like a swift and secret vengeance of God. No uproar had been made, but the heavy two-edged swords had cleaved the skulls of their victims at a single stroke.

It was the capricious work of reckless youth and hardened, unthinking age. When there is murder to perform, and rough riders are wanted to go out and cope with hell, only very young men should be picked; boys of eighteen have neither caution nor conscience; they are possessed of a foolish confidence in fate, and in their growing strength they believe neither in God nor devil; and if they once taste blood, they are savages.

Practically Oliver and Jim were of one mind. Jim had lived many years, but he had not learned discretion nor manly caution. His cool cunning had served him in such stead that he had come to think that he bore a charmed life, and like untried youth, he loved to dally with death and play at skittles with the grave.

To do this fearful deed alone they thought was the height of bravery; it was getting the start of others who might have been glad to do it; it was prowess to be proud of, and what a joke! These men, whom they had run through with steel, were about to go forth on deeds of murder, and the doom that was to come to others had broken upon themselves.

But upon that midnight raid hinged the fate of Kansas, and the fate of the Nation. The Free-State men in Kansas were discouraged, and were about to accept the terms of amnesty offered; silence or retreat. The Missouri River was closed to Northern immigrants going west-

ward, but not east, and the tide of home-seekers from the north had been turned back.

But now five of the chief defenders of Slavery had been struck down in a single night. Not shot from a safe distance; but beheaded, slashed, disemboweled, and their blood and brains spilt and scattered. An impression had been made—a terrible lesson taught. The lesson had been made plain that God slumbers not nor sleeps.

The Southrons placed the mangled bodies on display and men came from many miles to look upon the shattered forms. The scene was frightful and shocking, even to strong nerves, but the people that came knew that these were the men who had stolen the horses, stampeded the cattle, and burned the barns of Free-State settlers. These headless forms were once the men who had painted skulls and cross-bones on doors, who had frightened women, had made threats, and then fulfilled them by shooting down Northern men who had refused to leave. These were the men who had invited into the Territory, and were acting as guides for, an armed force from a sister State that was doing what they dared not.

The Free-State men were shocked, but horror gave way to confidence, and Brown rallied a force of fifty men, where a few days before he could not have raised twenty.

The Missourians still remained in camp, hesitating whether to go or stay.

Brown waited not for an attack, but marched his men upon them, in battle array, out across the plains. The men entrenched in the gully prepared for fight. The firing was fast and furious, and all the time the Yankee forces were creeping closer.

Suddenly, on the crest of the hill behind the gulch, appeared a young man wearing a cockade and bearing a banner. He waved his sword and called back to an

imaginary force behind, "Come on, boys, come on, all of you!!"

Thinking that a charge was being made upon them from two sides, the Missourians became panic-stricken and rushed down the valley—the only way open, and thence across the prairie to the east, in a frantic flight, pursued by a force that gained in numbers as it moved.

CHAPTER XIV

JOHN BROWN AND UNCLE SAM PARLEY

TAKING advantage of the fear that was cluttering the hearts of the Southrons, Brown rode out with five men and captured two prominent slave-holders who lived near the Missouri line. The men were seized in their beds, before they had an opportunity to resist. A letter was dispatched to Governor Shannon, offering to exchange these prisoners for the two Browns. With Old Man Brown's letter, each of the kidnapped men sent an urgent personal appeal that Shannon should comply. And Shannon complied—the exchange being effected the next day—Brown's word of honor being accepted to release his prisoners, if John and Jason were given safe conduct to Hickory Point. They were taken there and released. The next day the two well-frightened slave-holders were back in the bosom of their families.

But who struck that murderous midnight blow? Old Man Brown, everyone said. The Territorial Government offered a reward of a thousand dollars for his capture. This was a good deal of money in those days, but it was not enough to tempt any local officer to go after him. The fear of meeting a fate similar to the five Pro-Slavery

leaders had a most wholesome and restraining influence. Where would lightning strike next? Who could tell.

The Browns were homeless and were being hunted by an armed force. Peaceful employment was now denied them—they must stick together and sleep on their guns. They made their camps in the bluffs and woods that lined the streams—moving from place to place. Provisions they must have, and so they made short forays out among the Pro-Slavery settlers and demanded what they wanted. Where they could locate a fine horse that belonged to a slave-holder, they went out and took it—the enemy, that had proscribed and ostracized them, must pay the expenses of the ostracism. They were splendidly armed. Various adventurous young men among the Free-State settlers joined them, so their force numbered about forty in all—which included John Brown and seven sons, and a son-in-law—Henry Thompson by name, who had come on from the East with Watson Brown, in time to share the ignominy of their brothers.

Practically they were fugitives from justice—they had defied the Territorial Government. Wilkinson, whom they had killed, was a member of the Legislature—a sham Legislature to be sure, chosen through fraud—but, nevertheless, the law-making power of the Territory, duly installed and recognized by the General Government of the United States of America.

And so they lived houseless, homeless, hunted, yet not unhappy. They fared on the best that the country afforded. The Free-State people had no fear of them, of course, and in fact, aided and abetted them in many ways, keeping them informed of the movements of the two hundred U. S. troops that were out after them.

There were occasional skirmishes, but the troops were wary of coming in contact with this fierce band of

freebooters, whose fierceness, though not their bravery was greatly over-estimated.

And so a month passed with several killed, on both sides; but confidence was coming back to the Free-State settlers—Brown was at large and fear kept the Southrons civil.

But now a new officer had been sent on by the Government to take charge of the U. S. troops. This officer was instructed by his superiors at Washington to avoid any collision with the insurrectionists, but if possible, to get them to return to their farms. In fact, it was a diplomatic move, for Congress had finally gotten awake to the fact that this little prairie fire started away out in Kansas might possibly spread and become a conflagration that would sweep the land. Yet Congress sympathized with the slave interests; but to boldly join sides with the Missourians and to use the army to put down the Free-State men was too brazen a thing to undertake.

And so it came to pass that John Brown and his little band of fighters held their own; and meantime the newspapers of the North issued notes of warning that had echoed even through the legislative halls at Washington.

“It will not do to make war on any class of citizens—Massachusetts is getting warm over this thing,” said the President to his Secretary of War.

“Very well, I ’ll send a cool-headed man to Kansas to take charge of the U. S. troops, and give him orders to act as a peace-maker and induce all armed bodies to separate and return to their homes.”

The Secretary of War chose a Colonel by the name of Brydges — Richard Brydges — for the delicate mission, and Colonel Brydges duly arrived on the ground and took charge. His first act was to send a message to “Captain Brown” asking for an interview.

The men met close out on the prairie, on horseback.

Colonel Brydges was tall, slender, in age something under forty. He wore glasses and had the look of a student rather than a man of war. His brilliant uniform and sword rather belied the bookish cast of his features; and as Old Man Brown looked him over from under his shaggy eyebrows, he rather liked the fellow.

The men dismounted and as they walked forward towards each other, their hearts beat fast. The Colonel had expected to see a robber—booted, spurred and armed to the teeth; he saw only a plain old farmer, whose long white beard gave a patriarchial suggestion to the sober face. Brown carried no arms.

Brydges had dreaded the interview—not through a sense of danger—but to parley with stupidity and obstinate ignorance is never pleasant. These men shook hands—looked each other square in the eyes and both heaved a sigh of relief. Each saw that the other was sensitive, discerning and honest. When men with equal intelligence and purity of motive meet, subterfuge and formality can be laid aside. There need be no attempt to impress, nor effort to conceal, nor struggle to make plain. They gauge each other's hearts as though they had lived under one roof.

“ I know your mother,” were the first words of the old man—spoken quietly. The other gave a look of surprise. “ Yes, I know your mother. When I saw your name—Richard Brydges—I could not think it possible it was you.”

“ I—I do not understand,” said Colonel Brydges, taking off his glasses. He half thought that these rumors he had heard of this old man's insanity might have basis in truth.

“ When did you see my mother last, Captain Brown ?”

The old man looked off across the prairie, smiled sadly and answered: "Not since you were born!"

The Colonel shifted from one foot to the other; he now felt sure that this beautiful calm on the face of the other was only the peace that sometimes comes to the illusioned soul.

"Not for forty years? and yet you could see a resemblance between me and her—you have a good memory, sir!"

"Too good, perhaps—"

"And not having seen my mother for forty years, you still say that you know her?"

"Yes, here is a letter from her!"

Brown took from a pocket-book a soiled and creased letter and showed it to the Colonel.

"Why—surely in Heaven's name, yes! it is my mother's writing. Let me see the signature!"

"There is no signature. When she writes to me she does not sign her name."

"And why not, pray?"

"You officers of the army might be sent to arrest her for treason!"

"And can it be possible that you are the Brown that used to live in the Western Reserve?"

"The same."

"Why, often have I heard my mother tell of you—but what are you doing here?"

"Fighting for Freedom's cause."

"And my mother is encouraging you in this insurrection?"

"Yes."

Colonel Brydges paused, bit his mustache, and then took off his glasses and wiped them on a silk handkerchief.

"I see it all," he said after a moment, "you have only shifted the battleground and changed the methods a trifle. In other words, you have been found out and now have to fight openly."

"Yes, you have guessed it."

"But what a little world it is! And to think that my mother should have had an indirect hand in raising this rebellion that I am sent out here to put down! She always was a fanatic on the subject, though."

"Of slavery?"

"Yes."

"And you?"

"Me? why I'm an army officer and have no opinions—I obey orders."

"But you do not believe in human slavery?"

"Well, possibly not, although my grandfather was a slave-holder."

"Yes, I've heard he was."

"And you knew him, I should judge, by the way you speak?"

"Yes."

"And did he not treat his slaves—that is, his people, well?"

"Undoubtedly; one of his sons is a member of my company over there in that woods."

"One of whose sons?"

"Your grandfather's."

"An uncle of mine in your robber band? You are joking, my uncles are both dead."

"This is a colored man."

Colonel Brydges blanched, coughed, and answered after a pause:

"Captain Brown, we are digressing. My business here is to request you to disband your company, and

have all of your men return to their peaceful occupations."

"And the Missourians?"

"I have orders to scatter all armed and organized bodies of men in Kansas. If the Missourians march into Kansas, I will send them back."

"And after I lay down my arms, what then?"

"No one will molest you."

"But the Territorial Legislature has offered a reward for my capture!"

"I know, but they will withdraw it if you will agree to leave the Territory. In fact, they want no more bloodshed, and if you will say quits, they will. Will you do it?"

"Yes, but you have no authority to speak for the local government?"

"No, but I will go with you to see the Governor—I am sure he will grant you amnesty."

"And if he does, will you use your force to keep back the invaders at election time?"

"I surely will."

"And you know what that means?"

"No, what?"

"It means that there are seven hundred more Free-State men in this Territory than Pro-Slavery, and that Kansas will be a Free State. We have won our fight."

"All right! I congratulate you. I will see the Governor first, alone, and make an appointment with him to receive you."

"Very well."

"Then that's all for this time?"

"I believe so—good-day!"

They shook hands there on the prairie. One rode one way and one the other.

CHAPTER XV

LOVE EVER FIGHTS FOR FREEDOM

THREE days afterward, following the road that skirted the ravine, they went—Old Man Brown and Colonel Brydges. Brown in rusty jeans, rustier than ever from much rough weather; on the pommel of his saddle a Sharpe's rifle and in the belt, buckled outside of his coat, two pistols and a dirk—all dangling handy, worn for quick use and not for show.

Behind these two horsemen rode two more—Salmon Brown and the Colonel's orderly. Young Brown was arrayed like unto his father; he carried the heavy rifle, with a jaunty touch, that seemed to match the solitary eagle's feather worn in his slouch hat—a sly bit of irony for the benefit of the tightly, brightly buttoned orderly. But the orderly and Salmon were soon on good terms; youth quickly makes friends, and Uncle Sam's soldier boy had a wholesome respect for a man who was one of forty to hold at bay two hundred; and Salmon assumed that the other must be a brave lad or the Colonel would not have chosen him for this office. They laughed and joked, as young men will who are much under the heel of discipline and are suddenly turned out to play with none to reprove. They rode full fifty yards behind their superiors, and as Salmon chatted he balanced the rifle with a single fore finger and ran his eye across the prairie this way and that for any chance foe. There was a price on his father's head and a warrant of arrest out for himself.

And as the young men behind told tales of strife, the two men who rode ahead conversed on more earnest themes.

“ Yes, my mother is a regular fanatic on the subject of emancipation. When I left home to go to West Point,

I was nearly as bad as she—I suppose I drank it in in babyhood, but once established in the army, I saw the futility of her work and wrote her trying to dissuade her from the fruitless task.”

“ And did you succeed ? ”

“ Succeed ? Ha, she argued me into silence.”

“ But you forget that I am engaged in exactly the same work ! ”

“ Oh, no, you ’re not—this business here is different. You only want home rule for Kansas ! ”

“ Yes, but the Southrons call me a slave-stealer.”

“ I know, they think you are a robber, but brigands are often only exiled saints. If law pushes a man too far, he loses respect for all law and then is an anarchist. Now all you want is that settlers in Kansas should make their own laws. You object to illegal elections—and the reason you have defied the laws now is only because these laws were made by a fraudulent Legislature. Am I right ? ”

“ You certainly are.”

“ Well, this is a private talk, mind you, not official ; so I say confidentially that in Washington they prefer Kansas should be a Southern State, with all it implies. For one thing, it means two Southern Senators. Now there are sixteen Free States and fifteen Slave States—two more are needed to preserve the balance of power. But they cannot afford to wink openly at a corrupted ballot box. ’Cause why ? the whole North might get right up and howl—no telling what might happen—it might even come to civil war. Now you have kicked up such a row out here and attracted so much attention that the Government is obliged to step in and put you down, and if she puts you down she must keep Missouri out.”

“ I see.”

“ We do not want to fight you, for that would make all Yankeedom look on you as a martyr; and on the other hand, if you should refuse to lay down your arms, it makes treason of it. Now, my mother does not confide in me very much since we disagreed on the slave issue some years ago, but I ’m quite positive that she would not encourage you to keep up this fight.”

“ Would n’t she ? ”

“ No.”

The old man took a letter out of his breast pocket and handing it to Colonel Brydges, said: “ Read it aloud.” The Colonel read:

“ When you strike for the right in Kansas, Public Opinion shakes off her lethargy, comes forward to stay your arm, and the South cowers. When you have done your work there, smuggle a small band of determined men into Virginia and strike slavery a sudden blow, then retreat to the friendly mountains. The South will be staggered, yet she will pursue. But instantly the North will awake and come to your rescue, and better still, the slaves will arise. The snow-ball will grow as it rolls. In a year, two, three, or four, the South will be free and the General Government will endorse by Legislative Enactment the work which you have begun.

“ Do you know that a few Spartans, flitting from point to point in the mountains, dictated a policy to all Greece? Do you know that Scotland was never subjugated, simply because a few clansmen who knew the crags could stand off regiments? Do you know that in the mountains that separate France from Spain are tribes that have for centuries successfully defied the armies of both countries? Do you know how Napoleon left Elba with a handful of men, and marched into Paris with a million at his back? Do you know how Schmeyl in Russia dictated to the Czar from a cave? and last, but not least, have you forgotten how Nat Turner, a black man, held out for six weeks against the State of Virginia?

“When my beloved son was but a lad, it was my dream that he should be the leader who would ‘make my people free,’ and I sent him to West Point to learn military tactics. It was a mistake, but I did not know then that army life means intellectual and moral stagnation. Like a University it often irons men out to one dead level and extinguishes all masterly individuality. My son is a worthy man, and I love him with a true mother’s love, but he is not great enough to dare all and win all. For his has been a happy and successful life—he has never received his baptism of fire.

“And so I turn to you, the lover of my girlhood, and on you I fix my earnest gaze, for I know you are one raised by God to do this work. Moses was eighty when he led the Children of Israel out of bondage—do not tell me you are too old!

“You and I have left romance far behind—what is this life to us—a breath—a vapor! We have nothing to lose; we have all to gain!

“Remember the sword of Gideon!”

Brydges read the letter straight through in a voice that grew husky towards the last. He handed the missive back and turned his face to hide the unsoldierly emotion that was shaking him. They rode in silence for an hour.

“The dear old mother!” at last broke out the officer abruptly, “the dear old mother needs some one to care for her—I must resign so as to be near her.”

“But is she right in those historical instances?”

“Yes, I suppose so, but that is neither here nor there. Why, she is such a fanatic that if she were younger she might take the field herself!”

“And indeed, women have done it before.”

“I know—you refer to Joan of Arc, but she was crazy!”

“And successful!”

“Well, possibly.”

“ And it was women who went out from Paris and captured the palace at Versailles—women who precipitated the French Revolution.”

“ How comes it you know anything about the palace at Versailles, Captain Brown ? ” said the other with a smile, feeling that the conversation was getting too serious.

“ I ’ve been there.”

“ What, you ’ve been to France ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ When ? ”

“ Three years ago ; I ’ve carefully gone over most of the battlefields of Europe.”

“ Then my mother’s ideas are not new to you ? ”

“ No.”

“ And has she written them to you before ? ”

“ No, but thought is in the air. Do you believe in thought transference ? ”

“ Not I ; still, minds dwelling on the same subjects will, of course, often come to like conclusions. But do you know who that man is coming up over the knoll ? ”

“ Yes, I know him.”

“ Well, who is he ? ”

“ The newly appointed sheriff.”

“ Right you are.”

Brydges smiled, but the old man did not change his expression in the slightest. One hand went up to his pistol belt.

The sheriff stopped, saluted, rode up on one side of Brown and remarked that he had thought best to come out and ride in with the little party to avert any possible trouble that the citizens of Lecompton might make. Brown thanked him for his thoughtfulness.

“ By the way,” remarked the sheriff as they rode

forward, "by the way, Captain Brown, you of course know that the offer of a reward of a thousand dollars for your arrest is still valid?"

"Yes, I know."

"Well, I have the warrant now in my pocket."

"You 'd better keep it there, Mr. Sheriff!"

"Why?"

"If you take it out, I 'll kill you."

"Oh, I was only joking."

"You are unwise to joke with death."

They reached the village of Lecompton, and were well stared at by the citizens, but no incivility was offered.

Governor Geary, who had recently been appointed, came forward and greeted Captain Brown as one gentleman greets another.

Shannon had been so dictatorial to the Northern immigrants, and so hand-and-glove with the Southrons, that the relationship between the two parties was growing very much strained. Neighbor did not trust neighbor, and the whole Territory was a tinder box ready to explode at a touch.

Under these conditions Congress had wisely relieved Shannon and put a more diplomatic man in his place.

Geary had a fairly just and judicial view of the situation. Personally, he confessed to Brown that he sympathized with the slave-holder, but he was there to act as Governor of the whole people; he wished to see justice dealt impartially and hoped that prosperity would come to all.

But there was one condition he insisted on, and that was that John Brown and all of his sons should leave the Territory. Their presence there, he argued, was a continual reminder of what had gone before. In fact, the Browns had struck such fear and hatred into the hearts

of the Southrons that there was danger that under the influence of some undue excitement, whiskey—for instance—there would be a thirst for revenge and the flames would burst forth afresh. If they would only go, he would issue a proclamation, setting forth the facts and warning Missourians to keep to their own side of the line, and cautioning all parties to maintain the peace. This would be assuring to North and South alike and bring confidence to all concerned.

Brown listened patiently to the strong and logical appeal. He smiled with a half-smile of satisfaction when Governor Geary admitted that the Browns had practically carried the State for freedom.

“ And now will you consent to leave ? ”

“ Yes, I will go, but my sons are land owners here—I want them to stay.”

So a compromise was effected, whereby Brown was to leave the Territory within ten days; his men were to disband and return to their homes; amnesty was to be granted for all past offenses; and none but actual settlers who had been in the Territory three months should be allowed to vote at future elections. This was put in the form of a stipulation and duly signed.

That peace had been brought about on equitable terms was a matter of congratulation to all concerned. A courier was sent out to carry the good news; and Captain Brown and Colonel Brydges accepted Governor Geary's hospitality for the night.

The next day they started back for camp with much lighter hearts than they had brought thitherward.

Near nightfall, when nearing Brown's camp, they took a short cut across the prairie. A woman came out of a cabin and called to them that there was the dead body of a man lying in the road a half-mile to the north. They

turned back, and, on reaching the spot indicated, found the body lying face down in a pool of blood.

Brown dismounted and turned the man over.

It was his son Fred. He was not dead, but a tearing wound in his side from a charge of buckshot told that the moments of his life were few.

CHAPTER XVI

CAPTAIN CARVER HOLDS A RECEPTION

THE man who had lain in wait and shot Fred Brown was Martin White, a preacher of the Methodist Church, South, a member of the Territorial Legislature and a citizen of considerable prominence. No arrest was made; the sheriff putting forth the plea that White did not know that peace had been concluded. White did not, however, accept any such excuse for his act, but openly boasted that he "had done for one of the Browns."

Not long after, White was found dead in his own doorway; the ball from a Sharpe's rifle had struck him square between the eyes, and the light of his life was snuffed out.

John Brown's band had separated and gone to their homes. The old man was at Osawatomie with Ellen, Wealthy, and his grandchildren, to bid them good-bye before taking his departure for his old home at North Elba, New York. While there, this letter reached him from Captain Carver of Westport:

WESTPORT, MISSOURI, Sep. 10, 1856.

TO OLD MAN BROWN,

King of the Kansas Yankees:

So you have got to git at last! We feel so sorry you are going to leave us—but when the Governor says you have got

to go, and the U. S. Army says so too, we can only say fare-well, and may the Devil take you !

But slavery is not dead in Missouri and it never will die, for we are not Puritans, but sensible folks. There is to be an auction of niggers here next Thursday, come over if you can—the boys will make it pleasant for you.

Yours truly, CHARLES CARVER.

Brown smiled grimly at this insulting, exultant letter, and passed it over for his children to read.

“ I would like to accept his invitation,” he said, and then the matter was put out of his mind.

That night a black man came to Osawatomie, and made his way to where Old Man Brown was stopping. The negro was so awed on coming into the presence of the man of whom he had heard so much that he could scarcely speak.

“ Where did you come from ? ” asked Brown.

“ Wes’port, sah ! ”

“ And to whom do you belong ? ”

“ Captain Carvah, sah.”

“ And you say he ’s going to sell you ? ”

“ Yes, sah, on Thursday, sah, an’ my wife too, sah, an’ my chillern—we may all go diff’rent ways, sah ! ”

“ And why are you to be sold ? ”

“ The Cap’n he say Kansas is to be a Free State, sah, an’ he ’s too close to the bordah, sah.”

Brown smiled : “ Yes, Kansas is to be a Free State, and he is a leetle—just a leetle too close to make slave-holding safe. So you are all to be sold and sent back to Mississippi ? ”

“ Yes, sah, there ’s sev’ral spec’lators there now—it ’s to be a big sale. Can’t you help me to git my wife and chillern away, sah? We will b’long to you an’ work for you till we die ! ”

“ I think I ’ll help you get away. Carver has invited me over, and if you will just hide in this cellar until evening, we shall see what we shall see.”

Night came.

Six men and the runaway negro were driven in a two-horse farm wagon out of Osawatomie across the prairie towards the east. When within two miles of Westport, the wagon and driver were sent back.

The men moved on in the darkness, piloted across the fields by the negro, to the goodly residence of Captain Carver, planter, politician, stock-raiser and slave owner. His house was a mile from the village, up on the hillside, surrounded by its barns, granaries and slave quarters.

The negro went ahead to pacify the dogs, and notify the negroes to keep to their cabins.

Old Man Brown had a diagram of the house in his pocket and a copy of it in his head. He had located each room that must be looked after; and his men in their stocking-feet, with dark lanterns, entered the doors, open and unlocked, according to the custom of the times, and held the prisoners safely in their beds by the argument of a cocked pistol.

It was a sleek, clean, quiet, gentlemanly piece of work. Not a shot was fired—there was no violence. The inmates of the house, male and female, pulled the bed-clothes over their heads, inwardly cursing or commending their souls to God, as the case might be.

Meantime, the house was searched for money, and nearly five hundred dollars found. The negroes had hitched a stout team to a spring wagon, thrown hurriedly in quantities of hams, bacon, sacks of corn meal and potatoes; the negro women and children were tumbled in, with all the bed-clothes that were not pulled over the heads of the luckless white folks; eight thoroughbred

horses were saddled and bridled, so far as saddles would go; and after a parting threat that no person should venture his head out from under a quilt for a full hour under pain of death, the cavalcade moved away—twelve negroes in all, ten valuable horses, five hundred dollars in money, and provisions for a fortnight.

When the sun came up out of the eastern prairie, a great glowing red ball of fire in the white mist, they were thirty miles from Westport, and in a land of Free-State people—people who would have fought for them had the pursuer pursued. The horses were given a slack rein. In forty-eight hours the Nebraska line was reached. Two days more and they were in Iowa.

Here they stopped to rest for a space, and when camp was again broken, only Old Man Brown and Jim Slivers accompanied the twelve negroes; the sons must all remain in Kansas, for the “salutary effect” of their presence. The other men turned back on foot and made their way into Kansas to live the lives of honest and peaceful citizens.

And so Old Man Brown, with his negroes and his horses and his five hundred dollars, moved on to the North and East. And the question naturally arises how a conscientious man, as Brown surely was, could justify himself in taking other people’s property in this way?

The answer is plain: as for the negroes, they were God’s children as much as though they were white, and no man had a right to hold them in bondage and give them stripes as legal tender for services rendered. Having worked, they were entitled to wages; at the smallest calculation there was due them a horse apiece, and the five hundred dollars in money was simply to pay expenses.

Only three of the negroes were full-grown men; they

were armed, and of course, the old man and Jim Slivers were never without a rifle within easy reach. As they marched, Brown did not try to conceal their identity. And after a week he openly proclaimed it in every town, village and hamlet as they passed.

"They were once slaves," he would say. "I stole them away and am taking them through to Canada." And the crowd would send up a cheer for "Brown—Osawatomie Brown."

Across Iowa they moved, thence into Illinois. Northern Illinois was settled largely with New England people, and here ovations were tendered them, and often deputations of maidens in flowing white, carrying green branches, came out to meet them in wagons, with men on horseback. Provisions were tendered them without money and without price.

Indiana was reached, then Michigan, which was practically another New England, and when the November winds began to blow chill, they had come to Detroit, all without sickness or disaster, and the five hundred dollars intact, for the gifts given them had exceeded the expenses.

The money was divided among the negroes. The team that drew the wagon, with the entire camping outfit, was given to the black man who had suggested the exodus. The eight horses were unanimously voted to be the property of Old Man Brown and the jovial Jim Slivers, who had cracked jokes from Kansas to Canada.

After the refugees had been ferried across and were safely in Windsor, Canada, a solemn service of thanksgiving was held, and prayers ascended to God for their deliverance out of the land of bondage.

And taking sorrowful leave of these black men and women with whom they had lived as one happy family

for full two months, John Brown and Jim Slivers took the ferry back across to Detroit.

Each riding a horse, and followed by the six other faithful steeds, they rode down to Toledo and on to Cleveland. Here they were among old friends—friends who knew them well and who had known them for many years.

In the two daily newspapers Brown advertised that on a certain day at noon he would sell “ eight horses taken from Missouri slave-holders by force, as payment for wages due black men.” The sale was to occur in the public square of the city of Cleveland. The announcement also set forth that the money which the horses brought would be used to further the cause of Emancipation.

The unprecedented boldness of the bulletin attracted a large crowd.

Seated on his thoroughbred stallion, Brown told, simply and plainly, how he had gained possession of the horses. He cautioned prospective buyers concerning the defect in title and also gave a short sketch of his experiences in Kansas. The crowd cheered and when quiet was restored the horses were sold to the highest bidder. And be it said, in token of the temper of the bidders, that the animals brought nearly double their actual worth.

“ The Lord is on our side ! ” said Old Man Brown—Osawatomie Brown.

BOOK FIVE

CHAPTER I

FORCE, FANATICISM AND SENTIMENT

KANSAS was still the scene of strife; Brown was willing it should be so. Let the people look that way and let them view the inhumanities that would spread over the entire North, like the plagues of Egypt, if slave owners only dared! Another thing—so long as the public gaze was directed to Kansas, it was diverted from other directions.

This shrewd old man knew that peace does not come in a day—it takes time for wounds to heal, for revenge to die, for hate to sleep. Kansas was free, yes, in name, but not in fact. Painful days of reconstruction must follow; and in this interval there would be many men who “did not know that peace had been declared,” and these men would again and again tear open the bleeding wounds and some would pay the penalty. But freedom, full, complete freedom would come! Brown’s faith faltered not, nor blanched; his determination did not waver. Freedom would come to Kansas! Aye, and to the entire country. Sixteen of the States were free: the other fifteen soon would be. God had decreed it!

These sixteen Free States contained over three-fifths of the entire population of the country, two-thirds of the wealth, nine-tenths of the manufactories, four-fifths of the newspapers; the North printed all the books. In the Free States, illiteracy among American-born was a curiosity. In the South, for a black man to read and write

was a crime, and one-third of the white population were as ignorant as the negroes.

Only when out of reach of the clutch of the American eagle, and under the protection of the British lion, was a black man safe in the New World. And this in America, of all places! The United States of America, the boasted birthplace of liberty, whose Constitution flatly states that "all men are born free and equal," America, the home of the oppressed, and the place of refuge for the persecuted—that America should still retain this relic of darkness, when even Europe had in shame discarded it, was an affront to High Heaven. Cannibalism was gracious compared to slavery; cannibalism fed on the dead, but slavery sucked the blood of the living.

A leader was needed! a leader who would sound the trumpet and cry aloud, "Freedom, Freedom, in the name of the Lord!"

The sixteen Northern States would stand at his back and give their young men and their treasure; the four million slaves would arise and the one-third of the white population of the South, who were not slave owners, would at least keep hands off; and Victory, glorious Victory would come.

A leader was needed; a leader to sound the trumpet that would arouse the sleeping North.

John Brown had pondered these things in his heart; for years he had thought of scarcely aught else. He had listened for the Voice. It came, and it said: "Thou art the man!" And surely it must be so. Destiny had denied him peace at home, had robbed him of woman's sweet companionship, had wrecked his financial plans and played havoc with all his worldly ambitions. Providence had been only fitting him for this great work during all the long, restless, unhappy years.

And Brown knew this fact, that stands out against the dark background of history like a star: Only through the poor, the outcast and the despised can society ever be reconstructed. Ruskin states this truth, but John Brown did not get his logic from John Ruskin. Faith! 't is highly probable he never heard of Ruskin, although Ruskin came to hear of him, and paid to his memory a tribute, rich and rare.

The earth held nothing for Brown—he had been stripped of all, and the holding of all worldly ties so loosely had given him an iron courage, a bravery that knew no bounds. He had many times looked into the very eyes of death there in the West, and he had never faltered. Standing out on the prairie unprotected, he had answered shot for shot. Not once had he been scathed, not once had he felt an impulse to turn back. In every instance he had come off victorious when he had met the foe, face to face. He believed in Fate.

In fair fight, with ten men, he had defeated a hundred. And he had left Kansas simply because he had done all that his presence there could do—time alone could work out the rest.

The God of Battles was with him!

The outdoor life, the healthful fare, the change from cheerless plain and savage scenes to peace, plenty and applause, worked wonders in John Brown. His eye took on the luster of youth, his step became elastic instead of plodding, his form was strong and vigorous.

He had tasted success! what is so sanitary as success? It means quickened pulse, deep breathing, good digestion, sound sleep. Brown felt younger than for years. He gazed into the glass and saw with a slight shock the long, white beard of a patriarch—it was not in keeping with his young heart! He had the physical strength of

youth, and he knew in his soul that he could ride farther, shoot straighter, endure more and hit harder than any man of thirty who could be found on the streets of Cleveland. And this is what pure air, pure motives, and purity of life will do for a man. He never touched tobacco, nor strong drink, and in eating he stopped on this side, instead of going to that. He did not even drink tea and coffee. His conscience was clear, his ambition high. And flavoring it all was this feeling of power. He had looked into the muzzles of loaded guns and had had them turned aside at his word of command; he had dictated to governors; forced issues with sheriffs and parleyed successfully with United States officers.

And does any man who is not ripe for the grave admit even in the sacred silence of his closet that he has lost his "manly vigor?" No good woman was ever so old but that she was sure she was still attractive to the opposite sex. The man in whom the sense of chivalry is dead has passed to a point where the undertaker should claim him. Sexuality is the law of gravitation of the social world, and all noble, heroic actions, as well as the fine courtesies of life, and the tendencies that make up the art impulse, have their rise in this: the loves of men and women.

John Brown's eye was clear, his breath sweet, his teeth white, his form erect, but his beard—a year's growth—was snowy white. He took a second look in the glass and straightway hied him to a barber's.

When he came forth he had lost his beard, but had gained ten years in life—in looks, at least. The smooth-shaven face showed the firm mouth, the strong jaw, and the lines of care were less deep than in the days ago.

He bought a new suit of clothes, and felt an inclination to sneer at the clerk who suggested "something modest

for a gentleman getting along in years." The suit was gray, with brass buttons, after the manner of the times.

The cartridge belt, the two trusty pistols, and the long, dangerous, threatening dirk were wrapped up and placed in a valise. The rifle was packed away and exchanged for a simple walking stick.

His appearance no longer caused people to turn and stare at him as he passed along the streets; no small boys followed him, and he smiled grimly to himself as he thought how easy it would be, if a little worldly prosperity should come, to slip back into mere snug, smug, complacent respectability.

But he had a purpose—a great, sublime and glorious purpose. He was entering on the plans to carry this purpose to a successful conclusion. Yet the plans were not quite clear in his own mind yet—all in a sort of solution—he needed to discuss the details with some strong, clear, sympathetic soul. The bare fact of explaining matters to a friend makes them clear to one's self. In truth, it requires two to generate an idea.

He resolved to go to Cincinnati and see Margaret Brydges.

CHAPTER II

THE PLANS ARE BEING PERFECTED

JIM SLIVERS was delighted to know that John Brown was going with him to Cincinnati. They took the southward train that night.

"The Missus, she never know you in the new togs," said Jim.

"Mrs. Brydges has not seen me since I was a boy," said Brown, adjusting his cravat.

"Lordy, is that so—why, she talks of you heaps!"

"That is simply because we ran the 'underground' together, and wrote letters back and forth."

"An' yet never see each other?"

"No, I suggested going to see her once and she said it was hardly necessary."

"But you 're going now?"

"Yes, I have a great plan—a great plan, Jim—I have to talk it over with her. I 'm going to free all the slaves in the United States."

"Lumety, dumety, dee—you don't say!"

"Yes, I can't explain it all to you—the scheme is not yet complete—but in a year I will strike a blow that will shake the institution to its very center!"

"Where do I come in?"

"Of course, you are going to help. You did splendid service in Kansas."

"I 'spect I did—killed five men in one night, me and Oliver—even you never done so well!"

"Jim, never you mention that night's work again!"

"Why?"

"It is the one thing on our Kansas record I 'm ashamed of."

"But when folks said to you, face to face, that you done it, you never denied it!"

"True, I did not."

"If you was ashamed of it, why did n't you say it was me?"

"That would not have relieved me of the blame."

"But it would ha' give me the credit."

"No credit should be claimed for murder."

"But you said yourself that it was the one thing that saved Kansas—it made ev'ry ruffian shake in his boots."

"And so it did—but it was inhuman just the same. Come, let us talk of something else."

“ All right—we ’ll talk of that money you got for the horses.”

“ Yes, I got just fifteen hundred dollars; I ’m going to use the money in my plan.”

“ Your plan to free all the niggers what is ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, I ’m a nigger, an’ some money will make me feel freer than I do now! ”

Brown turned and looked at the fellow. Jim was showing a selfish side of his nature that he had never before revealed in Brown’s presence. Brown thought a moment and it came over him that possibly Jim had rights which he had not fully respected, and that he had hardly treated this dusty, rusty, red-whiskered little man fairly. Jim had been loyalty itself, and had shown a bravery under fire and elsewhere that was most admirable. He had obeyed orders—worse than that, he had exceeded them! To be sure, his intelligence was not far-reaching, and it was useless to explain to him extended plans, but in an emergency he was invaluable. In short, it came over Brown that if the whole car of forty men should at that moment turn on him and try to bring about his arrest, Jim would spring up on a seat, produce a pistol out of his boot, a knife out of his sleeve, and put the whole crowd to flight.

“ And about—about how much money do you think I should give you ? ”

“ I won’t lie to you, John Brown——”

“ Very well, state how much you expect! ”

“ I want a dollar and a half to buy a present for Jennie.”

“ What ? ”

“ A dollar and a half for a gold-plated ring for my old woman.”

“ Here ’s five—get a solid one! ” said Brown.

Cincinnati was reached late in the evening. Cincinnati, worthily named after Cincinnatus, who left his plow in the field to go fight in freedom's cause.

Perched high up on a bluff, commanding a view of the winding, muddy river that divided the Slave State from the Free, was a large brick house. Once a suburban mansion, but now without the many touches on grounds and surroundings that mark the home of ease and wealth. Down in the valley, factories—belching black smoke from tall chimneys—coal docks, machine shops and engine houses marred the once quiet view.

And this big house—relic of slavocracy—was now a school, a school for white and colored alike. And this being so, it was mostly a school for colored. The pupils ranged from pickaninnies a year old, who were left during the day while their mothers went out washing, to woolly preachers of fifty, who had preached long years without knowing how to read, and now became as little children that they might enter the supposed kingdom of heaven where knowledge dwells. Hard and stony, these old scholars found the path that leads to learning. Some of them after a year only got as far as c-a-t and d-o-g, and there they stuck, victims of arrested development. And yet these men could repeat chapter after chapter of the Bible—with occasional improvements, of course—and line off hymns of marvelous length, and if, perchance, memory lapsed, a ready wit supplied the missing line and rhyme—a foot one way or the other, what of that! Yet with tears they regretted their inability to read, not knowing that all things in life are sold, never given; that the law of compensation never rests and that with the ability to read things out of a book, Memory would in jealousy flee and leave only the slattern, Recollection, in her place.

In this big house were anywhere from five to forty

pupils. The terms began any time and never ended. There were no vacations and no tuition fees. Those paid who could and those who could not, did not. No servants were employed, save Jennie the housekeeper, and Jim Slivers, man of all work. Jennie was Jim's wife. All the rest of the work was done by the helpful hands of scholars. Sometimes these scholars stayed but a single night, packed away in barn, outhouse, cellar, or garret, carted off in clothes-hamper like Sir John Falstaff—not dumped in river, but carried to a place of safety, and then piloted by the Pleiades.

This old house, with its marks of decayed gentility, could be plainly seen in the daylight from the Kentucky side; and each night, all the night-time through, there burned, side by side, two lights in the attic windows. What though angry clouds darkened the pole star, these lights burned bright, a beacon beckoning onward, a promise of welcome! Every evening at sundown for many years, the mistress of the house had trimmed and lighted these lights; at day-break she put them out.

This house was a refuge to the oppressed, a home for the homeless. Here were taught not only the three R's, but the dignity of labor and the excellence of cleanliness, and right, and truth, and all that makes for righteousness.

And was it an effort thrown on the idle winds for these two white-haired women thus to expend their time and substance? In ministering to a barbaric people—a people of whom it was argued that they had no souls—was it an attempt to bale out the ocean with a spoon, to try to educate them? Small results came, very small indeed, for all those years of patient endeavor. Society held its skirts close when these women passed by, fearing contamination. Their money grew less and less as the years passed; no honors came to them; in history their names

are not known; above their graves, now close side by side, no proud monument rears its granite shaft.

They lived, they loved, they worked, they died, they sleep. Fanatics? who dares say it! Heroes, rather, the Christ-Spirit working through the loving mother-heart!

"See those two lights—that 's the place—Lordy, I 'm glad to see it—what 'll my Jennie say?—she never 'spects I 'm coming!"

They had left the station and followed the railroad track. The early winter night was gathering. The old man looked up at the lights. They seemed to gleam no welcome for him—he fain would have turned back. He, valiant man of war, undaunted even by death, now hesitated at thought of meeting a woman. He had suddenly become a youth again.

They climbed the hill, and passed in at the alley gate behind the house—straight in at the kitchen door without knocking. Jennie was there busy at the table, washing dishes. Jim stepped up behind her, placed his hands over her eyes and shouted, "Guess who it is?"

She "guessed" who it was, and turning quickly, applied the soapy wash-cloth vigorously to his face, and then, as if to make amends, kissed him three times with resounding Afri-American smacks. Brown stood still.

Jennie was a fine-looking mulatto woman, whose smooth, iron gray hair gave a certain dignity to her dark face. The first surprise at seeing her "man," over, she glanced up and saw this tall stranger looking on interestedly. Hastily pushing Jim to one side, she courtesied and stepped forward to receive his bidding, not knowing that he had come with Jim.

"Guv'ner Brown, this is Missus Slivers—Missus Slivers, Gen'ral Brown of Kansas."

Jennie suddenly lost her assurance. She had heard

much of Brown, and his virtues as related by Jim were always multiplied by ten. In fact, all of the heroic incidents that his imagination could invent were fixed on John Brown, and numberless deeds of daring that rightly belonged to others were transferred to his credit, when detailed by Jim.

This had gone on for so many years that Jennie had come to think of Brown as a mythical being; and now that she was suddenly brought face to face with him, it was like getting an introduction to the god Mercury—only Jennie had never heard of Mercury.

So she blushed—invisibly, of course—stammered, hesitated, but was soon put at ease by Brown's taking her hand and saying in a very matter-of-course way that he was glad to see her.

As soon as Jennie got her tongue, she began to chide her husband for bringing the visitor into the kitchen instead of ushering him into the parlor. But this reproof was cut short by the appearance of Mrs. Brydges. And now it was Brown's turn to blush, stammer and hesitate. But he, too, was put at ease by Mrs. Brydges's taking his hand in a very matter-of-course way and saying she was pleased to see him. No introduction was required; she saw Jim; she recognized Brown.

"My son is here, Captain Brown. He came yesterday."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, he told me of meeting you in Kansas, and that you had left there, and so I half expected you would come to see us."

Brown was getting hold of himself. Here were trouble and disappointment to start with, but these were the things he thrived upon. This United States officer, in brass buttons and dangling sword, gentleman though he

was, had ordered him out of Kansas. Now he was to be embarrassed by meeting him here.

And then Margaret wore no blue dress. She was not a delicate, beautiful young woman, nor even a sorrowful, middle-aged widow, but a woman of near sixty with snow-white hair, strong and hearty, and quite self-sufficient as a matronly widow should be.

There was no touch of sentiment in her voice or handshake; only good, plain, frank friendship.

She called up the stairway: "Richard, Richard, Captain Brown is here!"

There was a sound of pleasure in her voice, and evidently Colonel Brydges had given Brown a standing, for did she not say "Captain?" But it came over Brown that tender romance does not live so long in a woman's heart as in a man's, and he smiled just the faintest shadow of a cynical smile.

"Good-evening, sir—where is he—where is Captain Brown, Mother?"

Richard had come into the room, cast his eye around, and was out again in the hall.

"Here he is, here! this is Captain Brown; why, there must be some mistake—you said that you knew him."

"I am John Brown. Colonel Brydges does not know me on account of my wearing no beard."

"Can it be possible?" exclaimed the Colonel. He turned the visitor around twice and gave him a most cordial, yea, even affectionate greeting.

Then Ruth Crosby appeared—white-haired, but with the vigor that comes with earnest purpose and systematic employment. The Colonel's greeting had thawed Captain Brown. Tears came to his eyes as he kissed Ruth's cheek—sentiment, after all, was not dead. And now the ice was all thawed—they shook hands again all 'round.

"Can't we have supper in here, Mother, say yes, please—just we four?"

And so the mother smiled on her big boy, and said: "Why, for this once, of course—we don't have Captain Brown with us often."

A white spread was put over the center table, and a colored girl brought in the tea and toast and the poached eggs and the hot biscuit, and they drew up their chairs.

"I resigned my commission, Captain—resigned to come home and take care of my fanatical mother!"

"Rather he resigned and came here so that the mother could take care of her fanatical son," laughingly said Mrs. Brydges.

"I hardly understand," said Brown.

"Why, you converted him."

"I—to what?"

"Abolitionism."

"But we did not argue the question."

"It was well you did not, or it would have only set Richard deeper in his heresy—it was your life that did it!"

"You mystify me."

"Why, Richard wrote me that he came near saying to you, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,' and now he is so over-zealous on the subject of Emancipation that I have to restrain him."

"Don't worry, it won't hurt him."

"We could not convert him—he thought us only silly women, but when he saw you, your heroism won him," said Ruth.

Brown did not hear what she said. He glanced at her and then at Margaret. These two women looked much alike; beautiful faces they were; they shone with the beauty that comes with years devoted to high thinking, that subtle, feminine beauty that only is revealed where

spiritual aspiration keeps pace with intellect. Ruth's contact with Margaret had worked a wondrous change for good in both. Engaged in the same work, thinking the same thoughts, living the same life, they had grown alike.

Brown's successful work in Kansas and the fact that Richard had come over to the Lord's side, gave these women renewed courage.

For the time, they talked with the lightness of youth, and Richard added the zest of witty repartee and allusion to the sparkling conversation.

"How peculiar it was to have Governor Geary beg you to leave," said Margaret.

"Yes, leave the country for the country's good."

"And thus allow both sides to think they had won. You won, in fact, but the Pros have the satisfaction of saying you were banished!"

"It must have been glorious, going back to your men—to tell them that the Governor had consented to your requests!"

Brown gave no reply—he remembered that going back.

The others remembered, too.

"John," said Ruth, "what became of that man who killed Fred; was he arrested?"

"He was not arrested, but he is dead," was the quiet reply.

There was no more light talk now—the conversation became earnest.

"Mother, let's remove the cloth and have our quadrangular conference at once, right here."

"We will, there's much to discuss. Captain Brown has a definite plan of action—let us consider it."

The dishes were carried out, the cloth removed, the door was locked, and John Brown laid before them the plan.

CHAPTER III

THE PLAN EXPLAINED

THE plan was not peculiar nor complex; it was not even original. It was an adaptation to America of what Schmeyl had done in Russia.

The proposal was to select some rocky, mountainous point on the border of a Slave State and strike a hard, quick blow for freedom, just as Brown had done in Missouri when he had run off twelve slaves. The raid would be carefully planned and carried out with a boldness and swiftness that would terrorize the slave interests. The policy was to strike and retire. All great battles, even in pugilism, were won on just such tactics, and in the world's war history, time and again, small numbers have thus defeated great. By withdrawing to fastnesses, where cavalry and artillery could not follow, a few determined men could hold off regiments.

Slaves would be given their freedom and white prisoners occasionally taken and then exchanged for blacks, man for man; for the black men would make excellent and willing soldiers. Besides this, slaves would be constantly coming over to them, when it was known that liberty was theirs for the asking. Supplies were to come from foraging, and thus the enemy would supply the sinews of war both for aggression and defense.

Unlike the raid of Brown into Missouri, this first bold stroke must be severe enough to startle the entire land. To attack merely a few plantations and run off the slaves would not be enough—it would be of too local a character. The disease was virulent—it had taken hold of the very nation—the treatment must be heroic. To that end the Federal Government must be attacked—the demand for freedom to all must be made upon the United

States of America. The cry must be, " Give us liberty, or give us death."

The Constitution granted equality, the Executive refused it. These lovers of liberty, loyal to their country, arose against their country for their country's good. They loved their native land too well to allow it to do a disgraceful thing. Like Virginius, they would even strike to her death a beloved daughter rather than see her become the prey of infamy. Nothing held slavery in place but heredity and tradition—the cords must be cut.

When the first blow was struck, the bold band would fall back to a place of safety. Their cry would be taken up by the entire North, but the General Government having been attacked, troops—both militia and regulars—would be sent in pursuit. These troops would be repelled—sharpshooters from concealed and unlooked-for spots would teach them caution. Meantime, another blow would be struck at some unexpected point—struck in the night without warning, quick and severe, giving the idea of numbers. This would give the slaves courage and there would be uprisings all through the South, that would furnish each community all it could do to look after its own affairs. No able fighting men could be spared from any one point in the South to go in defense of another.

After three or four sharp raids, and as many uprisings—for the negroes were already impatient and ripe for revolt—President Buchanan would issue a call for volunteers to put down this spontaneous cry for liberty—which he would call " internecine revolution." This call would be answered by several thousand young men of the South and a few adventurers of the North. But the sentiment of the North being almost entirely Anti-Slavery, the inhabitants would not, of course, think of

leaving their homes to fight for an institution they despised.

President Buchanan's proclamation for troops would be followed by another; a call would go forth from John Brown. To this the Anti-Slavery people of the whole land would respond, and the young men of the North and West would flock to his defense.

Two-thirds of the people being opposed to Slavery, Congress would convene and the President would be compelled to issue an Emancipation Proclamation. He would also grant amnesty to all engaged in the uprising, and order all bodies of armed men to disperse.

Then laws would be passed for the better protection of the colored people, and Time, the great healer, would do the rest.

It might take one year, it might take two or three. But all that was needed was a leader—a bold leader, one who would “be bold, be bold, but not too bold.” Once started and the country aroused, the conflagration could no more be stopped than a prairie fire could be ordered back by Congress. It was a natural law at work; the revolt of the human heart at certain deeds, which must occur when civilization has reached a certain stage.

But the fuse must be carefully laid ere the train be lighted.

The undisciplined blacks and whites that would flock over to them would be a mob; they must be trained, whipped into shape and armed before they could do effective service. Competent men should be ready for this work of drilling, and arms must be secured ere a single shot be fired.

It would take time to secure these men to officer the blacks, it would require effort to secure money to

purchase arms, and all must be done with the strictest secrecy; this was imperative.

"And where would you begin?" asked Ruth.

"There are many Anti-Slavery people in the mountains below Kentucky. To strike the Blue Grass country and retreat into Tennessee is my plan. The Louisiana Swamps are a good refuge, but I feel more at home in the mountains."

"The point to strike is Harper's Ferry, Virginia—I've been there within a month. The place has about four thousand people—it is in a valley and all around are hills where no cavalry can go," exclaimed Colonel Brydges.

"I've thought of that, too," said Brown.

"And I believe that Mrs. Brydges suggested it to you both," said Ruth.

"Very likely, but we will not scramble for honors now—wait until there are spoils to divide."

"Or blame to fix."

"Possibly! The whole thing is an idea yet—every great reform was once an unspoken word. But this one is assuming shape—I know military science and I believe this thing is wholly feasible. The Bashi-Bazouks have made a science of stampedes. It is the safest, cleanest, strongest plan of warfare that exists—a return to first principles—and when backed by public sympathy, as this will be, it's bound to win. Captain Brown, you shall be General-in-chief of this glorious crusade. Nature and Experience have done for you what West Point and Scott's *Manual* have failed to do for me. I will be second in command and will support and obey you."

"It's not the glory I desire—I simply wish to do my duty."

"You have the power, and the ability is the call! Captain Brown, do you not feel that God has pushed you

out from your fellows to do this work?" asked Mrs. Brydges.

"Yes, I've sometimes thought so."

"The years have been preparing you for it. That Kansas warfare has made your name known to all the leading Abolitionists of the North. Go and see them personally and prepare them for the stroke you are to make. Secure their promise to back you. You need not tell them where or just how you will strike, but let it be thought that you will follow example, and march into Missouri from Kansas and drain the South of her slaves in that direction!"

"And as for men," said Colonel Brydges, "we only want a few to start with. Too many would be a disadvantage—they would attract attention to the plot."

"How many, think you?" asked Mrs. Brydges.

"Oh, not over a hundred, and these must be scattered so as not to excite suspicion."

"Well, it will take time to pick these men who will officer our raw recruits. I'll select them myself and you go prepare the North by quietly seeing every leading Abolitionist."

"I will do it—but your work is already partly done—I have six sons ready for you now, and in Kansas there are at least five men, I know, who have been tested under fire, who will join us."

"Good, we want no one who has not faced fire. No man knows whether he has courage or not until he has smelled powder."

"Then we want a topographical map of every county, through the Pennsylvania line at Harper's Ferry to North Carolina."

"Surely we do—that's where the fight will be."

"Well, go make the map."

“ I ’ll do it ! ”

“ And meantime we will pray and hold the rope, as the women did when St. Paul was let over the wall in a basket,” said Ruth.

“ Your prayers will mean much—when success comes the credit must go to Margaret Brydges,” exclaimed John Brown.

“ We will talk of that later—it ’s past midnight—honest folks should be abed.”

They shook hands and separated for the night.

CHAPTER IV

KINSMEN ONLY IN NAME

BBROWN left Cincinnati with a heart filled with hope. There was power and purpose in his step, and steadfast faith in the glance of his eye.

Among his peers, could they have been found, his personal magnetism would have swayed opinions as did the will of Cromwell, or Chatham, or Pope Innocent. But the great of the earth are few; for the many, the horizon shuts out all beyond—the bread and butter question is supreme.

At Hudson, Brown found his father hearty and vigorous as old men go—nearly eighty years of age. He still had his watery eye on the main chance. He felt a sincere pity for his favorite son who had gone off after strange gods. Of course, old “ Squire Owen ” believed in emancipation, but that his boy John had wrecked his life in futile attempts to make men free was a source of grief to him; he fell on his neck and wept.

He knew somewhat of all that his grandchildren had

endured in Kansas, he guessed at the hardships yet to be borne: "Oh, why did they not stay here and be content!" he cried.

Neighbors came in, hearty and brusque; they had scarcely heard of Kansas. Some confused it with Kansas City and thought it near Chicago. They read but little and that only in the *Gospel Banner*, which came weekly, and treated mostly of matters celestial, omitting the mundane as profane. Then these worthy neighbors had crops to plant, harvests to gather, to them babies were born, and occasionally death came—what did they know of bleeding Kansas? They had troubles of their own.

John Brown had a brother two years older than himself by the name of Jeremiah. We have not before mentioned Jeremiah, simply because he plays no part in this history. He was an honest and prosperous farmer.

"Haint you mighty glad you be out of Kansas, John?" asked Jeremiah.

"Yes, but I 'm going back."

"Goin' back, do tell! and what for?"

"To free the slaves in Missouri."

"Jest hear him, Father! out of one scrape and right into another!"

"Do you think I could rest with the small success I 've had?"

"Small success? I did n't know you had any!"

"I helped make Kansas a Free State."

"Rubbish! who cares when it 's so far away."

"From where?"

"Why—why, from Ohier."

"But Ohio is not the world. There are thirty-one States in this Union—fifteen of them are Slave States—I will not rest until all are free!"

“ Father, the feller is crazy—he never was just right, you know! ”

“ So you think I ’m crazy ? ”

“ Not think so! you surely be—you ’ve got bees in your bonnet.”

And yet old Squire Owen did catch the infection just a little. He believed in his son, as fathers will, but his belief was a faith mixed with pity, and this is not good mortar. A prophet hath no honor in his own country; Brown did not expect to enthuse Hudson—he could do no great work there on account of the unbelief of the people. But his ardor was slightly dampened by their dullness. He thought of a quotation he had read in *Plutarch* or somewhere: “ In the presence of stupidity the gods are dumb.”

Nearly two years had passed since he had seen his family. They were still at North Elba—the patient wife and eight children. A baby had been born shortly after he left—a girl whom they had named Annie. This was his twentieth child, but he thought of her with all the tender solicitude that the bridegroom of a year does of his first. From the dullness and deadness of his old neighbors, he turned with anxious longing for the chubby baby hands and the sweet baby breath, this baby of the evening of his days. She would understand; yes, this laughing, dimpled baby Annie would know. He would reveal to her his plan; she would coo a blessing and kiss him damp baby kisses on nose and cheeks, and applaud his high purpose in all the dainty ways that are universal to these little souls fresh from God.

Then he would go forth and find the noble thinking men of the land who had written and spoken on this great theme, so dear to his heart, and he would speak, too.

At North Elba the thrifty wife had made everything spick-span, neat and clean in anticipation of the coming of the great man, of whom all felt a bit in awe. They had seen so little of him, they hardly knew him; yet they believed in him through and through. The wife, Mary, no longer chided him on account of his absence, for she felt a faith in the power of the man; a power she could neither comprehend nor explain. She was sure he would yet do a great work that would bring him honor and fame and wealth. And in this would they not all share? So what was poverty and privation, after all, in view of the glory yet to come!

This big family upon the rocky hillside at North Elba had little money—scarcely any, in fact. They spun wool and flax, and made their own clothing; they raised peas, beans and potatoes; each fall there was a pig to kill, or if the pig had to be sold to pay taxes, the boys secured game, and if there was no game for meat, why, they did without. So they were hearty and happy; for happiness is a commodity that is given out by Mother Nature to rich and poor alike, in equal portion.

The coming of their father was a great event to the juvenile Browns. They were all anxiety for days and days, and walked out miles and miles on the winding road to meet him. And when at last they saw him, sitting there in the wagon that had gone across to Elizabethtown to meet him, they hid in the bushes and fain would let him pass. But he spied them and sprang out over the front wheel to greet them, and they were all taken in and went jogging back, all talking at once, to the old log house, where Mrs. Brown was waiting in her new calico dress and big check apron to receive her lord.

There were presents brought for everyone—foolish little presents—but very dear and much prized they were.

Then there were useful things—sugar, tea, dried fish, rice, bacon, and yards of white cloth and a ribbon or two for the big girls—which the mother thought were not very useful, for they tended to vanity, but the girls were willing to risk it.

Very happy was this home coming! What is better after all than to go home? "We must go home, we must go home. For we have been away so long it seems forever and a day. We must go home; the laughter of the world is like a moan upon our tired hearing; we must go home!"

But John Brown could not stay long; he must be about his Father's business. He could tell his wife but little of his plans. Good woman that she was, all of her days had been taken up with taking care of babies, preparing meals, making clothes, caring for sick folks, and encouraging discouraged well ones. To arise at five in the morning and toil steadily until night; to cook, to sew, to plan, and piece and patch, and arrange to make one dollar do the work of two, is the fate of ten thousand women, their whole lives through. In such lives the absence of so-called culture and bookish knowledge need not be mentioned—God knows.

Mrs. Brown hardly knew whether Illinois was this side of Kansas or the other, and as for Harper's Ferry—la me! she thought it was in Missouri, so she did! But she was willing to do her work, look after the children, run the farm, and spare the big boys and their father to do the Lord's errand, of course she was!

So old John Brown, Osawatomie Brown, kissed her very tenderly, and as he did so the sternness of his strong face vanished, and the piercing eyes grew soft and gentle as a youthful lover's, and filled with tears. And he went away again in the wagon that had brought him,

out down the winding valley, the children tagging behind and dropping off one by one, waving hats and hands until he was lost to view in the never-ending gray-green of the forest.

CHAPTER V

TRANSCENDENTALISM AND "BEECHER BIBLES"

IN nearly all the larger towns and cities of the North were Abolition Societies. These clubs or societies were not very popular; sometimes they were frowned upon by the church organizations, which considered them rather meddlesome and foolish institutions, whose only good was that they allowed over-zealous people to work off their superfluous emotions in a harmless way.

But occasionally these societies had as members the best men in the place. Brown went from town to town and city to city, making acquaintance with the men who composed these clubs. He was received everywhere with courtesy and sometimes with genuine fervor.

In Boston he found many strong men who were earnest Abolitionists. He met Theodore Parker, Edward Everett Hale, Thomas W. Higginson, Wendell Phillips, F. B. Sanborn, E. B. Stearns, William Lloyd Garrison, and many others equally sincere and outspoken.

A day was set for him to appear before the "General Court" and make an appeal for an appropriation for the benefit of New England people whose homes had been despoiled in Kansas. He gave his one simple little address; it was received with profound attention. He was questioned and catechized at length, and although he did not secure the official appropriation which he asked for, yet his speech made so favorable an impression that it won him both dollars and friends.

Many of the villages about Boston were visited. At Concord he spoke in the Town Hall, and in the audience were Emerson, Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, and Louisa M. Alcott. So greatly was Mr. Emerson impressed that he went home and wrote in his diary: "I deem Brown of Kansas quite the manliest man I ever saw," and that very night he began the *Essay on John Brown*. Mr. Alcott was visibly affected, and, having no handkerchief of his own, was supplied by Louisa, who shared hers with him. Says Mr. Alcott in his Journal: "He spoke of the distress his children had endured in Kansas and of the death of his son, all with no outward show of feeling, but with a pent-up reserve force and meaning that was ominous in its import."

Yet in spite of these encouraging receptions from men of influence, Brown saw that commercial Boston had its ears stopped with South Carolina cotton so it could not hear the groans of the bondsmen. He was shrewd and wise enough to note that the men who took him by the hand were exceptional.

And even among the Abolitionists there were factions. William Lloyd Garrison was an avowed non-combatant, and Wendell Phillips pinned his faith to moral suasion. Brown spent several days at the home of "Wendell and Ann," and plainly told them that while "moral suasion" might answer in Boston, he would as soon load a cannon with hot mush to fight an Armada as rely on such a soft weapon as moral suasion in Missouri. In fact, he begged Mr. Phillips to go with him and spend three months in Kansas, so that he might properly diagnose the case, but Mr. Phillips preferred the rostrum to breast-works. Yet be it known that the last time Brown met Wendell Phillips, Phillips gave the old man a hundred dollars and said, "Give it to them, John Brown—give it

to them with a Sharpe's rifle! You fight in your way and I will in mine, and together, by the help of God, we shall succeed!"

Brown had hoped for a general recognition, coming as he did in the name of Freedom; instead of that it was only here and there that a strong man came out, and often then looked furtively about and expressed himself in whispers. Many Abolitionists were just a little afraid of being laughed at, if not something worse. They would hold parlor meetings, calling in the elect, and Brown would relate his simple tale of Kansas hardship; he would tell, without boasting, what he had already done, and he would tell also what he proposed to do, if but the people would sustain him. Such was the power of his unpretentious eloquence that wherever he spoke, tears would fill the eyes of those who listened to his recital of the wrongs inflicted on Free-State people in Kansas. But when subscriptions were called for, the responses would come in form of one-dollar bills with an occasional five, and, at long intervals, ten. There was no burning zeal in the matter; in fact, those who gave usually extracted a promise that their names should not be mentioned.

In several instances, people were met who were so strong and earnest in their faith, that Brown partially confided his plans to them, and asked for their individual co-operation. Then it was that they halted and with one consent began to make excuse. One had bought a piece of ground and must go see it; another had bought five yoke of oxen and must go prove them; another had married a wife.

The last named was the most common excuse—the wife would not allow. All young men who had no wives seemed suddenly to have gotten themselves engaged. And the universal way that men had of throwing the

burden of excuse on their wives and sweethearts struck Brown as peculiar, until it came to him that man has ever laid the blame of his sins, both of commission and omission, on woman.

He also thought of how Fred had a sweetheart in the East, and of how she did not hold him back from what he considered his duty. And the next man who dodged behind a woman, got the flat statement from old John Brown that he was a coward, who, not being willing to fight for Freedom's cause, made his wife bear the brunt.

Of course, the accused man was indignant; he even cancelled his subscription, and said that in future Abolitionism could go to the devil for all of him.

But Brown was not discouraged. To be sure, he had slightly overrated the enthusiasm of the North; he had forgotten that they were a commercial people, and that slavery was a good way off to most of them; yet he pressed onward and felt somehow that he was making headway.

"Never mind, it only means a little more time," he said.

A year passed and instead of striking the great blow with the sword of the Lord of Gideon, they met to talk it over. Colonel Brydges, being a bachelor, considered Cincinnati home, and Brown agreed with him that his mother's counsel was valuable and safe.

So again, the two women and the two men met behind the locked doors of Mrs. Brydges's sitting-room and discussed ways and means. Brydges had a better report to make than Brown. He had traveled on horseback and afoot from Altoona, Pennsylvania, down through Chambersburg to Harper's Ferry, and then on through Virginia to Salisbury. North Carolina.

He had looked the ground over carefully and prepared a topographical map of the country about Harper's Ferry, and gave it as his opinion that Nature had arranged things thereabouts purposely for their benefit. "There are flat shelving rocks all through the mountains there, where one man can hold off a regiment. The Pass at Thermopylæ is not a patch to a shelving rock that is protected by another, one size larger, above it!"

But, in getting men, he had met with little encouragement. Army officers sided with slavery or else were apathetic. Some were restless and ready for adventure that offered victory, but having no deep feeling in the real issue itself, Brydges could not confide in them. So, often, those who would be willing to go he did not want. It was absolutely necessary that he should move with great caution and not give his plans away to an unworthy person; then Brown had insisted on only temperate men being taken, and this was a hard condition.

As for Brown himself, he had collected nearly four thousand dollars in money, and had aroused ardor to an unknown degree—small or large he could not say. Instead of kindling enthusiasm, sometimes he had created opposition. But the women were sure he had done much good, and as for funds he had done remarkably well. But he did not think so. Ten thousand dollars at least should be had; for arms and provisions must be bought, and stored at various points in the mountains of Pennsylvania and Virginia, so there would be no delay or slip in carrying on the war when once begun.

However, in one sense the war was already on, for in Kansas the fire had broken out afresh, on account of continual raids from Missourians, who it seems were unable to give up Kansas with a goodly grace.

So it was decided that Brown should go to Kansas at

once, for the double purpose of "keeping things warm," and of securing men for the Virginia raid.

His presence in Kansas was a synonym for war. He appeared without disguise, a rifle on his shoulder and belt full of pistols. The Free-State settlers hailed him as deliverer, and tendered him welcomes that might have turned the head of a younger man. The Southrons looked at him askance, but offered no incivility—it was not safe.

He recruited a following of fifty young men, and threw up earthworks about a log fort a few miles back from the Missouri line, near Paoli. Spies were sent out to gather the names of all slave owners in counties along the border, and then Brown went over and released the blacks. In short, the border counties of Missouri were drained of their slaves.

Various Missourians, who had been active in despoiling the crops of Free-State men, were visited and warned. There were several sharp fights and a few men killed on both sides, but peace was secured even though it had to be fought for.

But Kansas was secondary in Old Man Brown's thoughts, and little did his fighting band of hardy men know that he was leading them out, not so much to fight the Southrons, as to study their qualities and learn who were bomb proof and who not.

Brown had a theory that no man knew what he could do until he tried. Men timid in a parlor often make the best sort of timber for guerillas. He was culling the basswood from the hickory.

A year passed. Peace had come to Kansas—temporary peace—and Brown had secured twenty men who were staunch as tempered steel. These men knew no such thing as fear; they had intelligence, they had faith in

their leader, they were devoted to the cause. But they did not know military science, and, as they were to act as officers, they must be drilled and tutored.

These men were taken to Tabor, Iowa, and Brydges sent on a competent officer to give this score of men a proper training for the duties yet to come. And let it here be known, this town of Tabor was made up of a colony from Oberlin, Ohio; and further that Tabor, Iowa, should be remembered in history as giving more men and treasure in behalf of Freedom, in proportion to population, than any other town in the United States.

When summer came and flowers bloomed, the Browns had slipped out of Kansas, one and all. Their presence was not missed. Fred, in his grave, was quiet, and the two little graves near, of Jason's children, attracted no attention, for privation, exposure, and strife made graves common there on the prairies, and the busy settlers had only time to think of life.

John and Jason had moved back to Summit County, Ohio, with their families and had rented farms. The intention was that they should stay there until the Great Blow had been struck, when they would take advantage of the enthusiasm, enlist a body of determined men and march to their father's defense, recruiting as they went.

Salmon had taken himself a wife and was now at North Elba, New York, also awaiting the bugle blast, when he, too, would march southward with men at his back.

These tides flowing to the South from various directions were counted on as a strong scheme for furthering the cause. An armed force gathers power like a tempest, and the hosts that would march from Canada, Ohio, New York, and Boston would arouse the sleeping land as nothing else could. The echo of the steady tramp of armed men—the glitter of bayonets, the shrill shriek of

fire, the roll of drums—ah, it means much! Arouse, ye hosts of Freedom—the time is ripe!

The forty thousand negroes were preparing. Hundreds, aye, thousands, of stern, uncompromising Abolitionists were ready. They knew not from what point the call would come—they knew not where the blow would be struck—but they were all ready, waiting, expectant!

Brown had ordered arms—rifles, pikes, swords, and revolvers—at Hartford, Collinsville, and Springfield. These were being shipped in plain boxes, marked “implements” or “hardware,” to various small stations in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Brydges with a faithful twelve met the “goods” and carted them back into the mountains, where they were carried on mule-back and man-back to caves and caches. They were rolled in oil-cloth and hidden away with provisions to be called for when wanted. The twenty picked men at Tabor were written to come on in squads of four. Brydges had twice as many more ready to respond at a moment’s warning. Brown was hurrying forward the arms and munitions. Money had come to him, and a promise of more.

He hastened to North Elba to see that the wife and babies were provided for. He remained but a day, and then with his sons, Oliver, Watson, Owen, and his two sons-in-law, Henry and William Thompson, he started for Harper’s Ferry.

CHAPTER VI

THE TIME IS SHORT!

[T was midsummer. The blow must be struck before the harvest was gathered—for then laborers were most needed, and could ill be spared. The negroes

would leave the crops to rot in the fields and flock to the deliverers for freedom. This would cripple and tend to humble the proud plutocratic dealer in human flesh, right at the start.

With Oliver and Watson, Brown entered Harper's Ferry and stopped at a modest tavern. They were unarmed and dressed as plain farmers from "York State." They wished to purchase several hundred acres of land where they could make a home and pasture their flocks.

Various men, who owned large tracts of land thereabouts, came to them and offered to deprive themselves of slices of the rocky hillside for a consideration.

Some of these men were slave-holders. They were very courteous and hospitable. They loaned their horses and carriages to "Mr. Smith" and his sons, so that they might go and see how the land lay. The Smiths spent a week in looking about, and, finally, instead of buying they decided to rent, for a year at least, to see how they liked it.

Five miles south of the village of Harper's Ferry, they found a farm that suited them fairly well. They dickered over the rent, but finally came to an arrangement with Dr. Kennedy, the owner, and paid him three months' rent in advance.

The neighbors watched them closely, for country neighbors are always inquisitive; they thought that there was not much furniture brought for so big a house. They also noted the absence of women and children. And, furthermore, the sheep raisers had no sheep; leastwise they had not heard any bleat, and as for cows, there was not a horn to be seen. They had one old horse and a wagon, but no plows nor harrows, nor rollers. Some of the neighbors said that Old Man Smith—the one with the long white beard—had two sons, and some said a

dozen—for on a certain moonlight night full twelve men were seen to come out of the house and go off toward the mountains.

And the upshot of it was that Smith had found gold in the hills—they always knew it was there—he had sent off for experts and they were now prospecting. More men came, and every morning they went off to the hills with picks and shovels.

They were a civil lot of men—those fellows that lived at the Kennedy farm—but unsociable,—“they never neighbored with nobody,” said an old farmer to his wife. Among them were several negroes, and they were just as unsociable as the rest.

Ten miles back from Harper's Ferry, well over into Pennsylvania, Colonel Brydges had his camp of forty-seven picked men. All had been officers in the regular army; several were veterans of the Mexican War. All had been under fire, all were duelists in the best sense, and ready to give fight single handed; for be it known that there are men who will fight well in battle line, who cannot be tempted to pick their man and engage him to the death with a dirk. These men were fighters every one, and yet with intelligence and force enough to break a mob of raw recruits into files of eight, and make them do systematic work.

Brydges and his men knew this country well. Grand, wild, terrible, yet friendly it was. Ages and ages ago, nature had tossed up great masses of earth-stuff and allowed it to drop as it would; massive ledges of rock jutted out in fantastic shapes, and disordered, distorted strata projected themselves this way and that. The valleys were narrow, the steeps abrupt, and the whole effect was that of a stone-strewn maze made to baffle and confuse. Over all grew a dense forest of hemlock, inter-

spersed here and there with pine, oak, chestnut, and maple. And these leafy curtains concealed the entrance to many a friendly cave that could only be entered like the sacred temples of Nyanza, on hands and knees.

Here Colonel Brydges and his force were to remain until Brown and his twenty Kansas rangers struck the first blow. Brown was to march into Harper's Ferry at two o'clock at night and quietly capture the Arsenal, which was guarded by only a few men. He was then to take possession of the railroad depot, cut the wires and destroy the railroad bridge. He was also to capture at least forty white citizens as they appeared on the streets at daylight. Of course, the town would be panic stricken, at first, but by seven o'clock, at least, some of the citizens would recover their wits and get out their guns ready to fight.

At this time, Colonel Brydges with his picked men would appear on the scene, marching in from two sides, having left their camp just three hours before. The distance had been walked by Brydges, so was properly timed. This fresh force would at once throw the place into a new panic, when all the prisoners that could be easily handled would be seized, and both the Brown and Brydges forces would drop back into the hills.

The quick move of two assaults, one right after the other, would terrorize and give the idea of numbers; and as Brydges would retreat northward into Pennsylvania and Brown southward into Virginia, it would require a double force to follow them.

The white prisoners would be exchanged man for man for able-bodied blacks, who would be at once armed with pikes, and with rifles as soon as they were taught how to handle them. All was ready.

But the summer was slipping past; fall had come and

the big lot of ammunition that had been bought and paid for had not arrived. The factory in Hartford had had a fire—it took time to rebuild.

Brydges was getting nervous, Brown serious.

What was to be done? Brown must go on to the East and secure more ammunition at once.

He promised not to be gone more than a week.

CHAPTER VII

AN OLD FRIEND WORKS A SPELL

ONE of the principal citizens of Harper's Ferry was Colonel Washington. His residence was two miles out of the village, on the road leading to the Kennedy farm.

Back of Colonel Washington's mansion, on the roadway that ran north and south, was a row of a half-dozen whitewashed cottages—built right on the street. Behind these houses was a stretch of well-tended garden, where tall bean poles, covered with vines that grew lush and lusty, lifted themselves clear above the flowering tobacco and gaudy sunflowers.

These houses were occupied by colored people. Such cabins, made out of rough boards, plain battened and whitewashed, are a universal feature of architecture throughout the South; and very dull is that person who cannot distinguish, from the outside, the habitation of a negro from that of a white man.

On his trips back and forth from town after mail or on errands, Jim Slivers, body servant and own familiar friend of John Brown, had noted that the second house from the end on this row of cabins had a sign above the door. Above this sign was a horseshoe. But colored people

are given to hanging out signs, and they are also hopelessly given over to horseshoes and other talismanic schemes for keeping witches away, and bringing good luck.

Now there were two things that Jim Slivers prided himself upon; one that he was not a negro and the other that he was not superstitious. Yet he was a negro and also superstitious. For when a man begins to pride himself on the absence of a thing, he usually has it,—else, forsooth! he would be unconscious of it.

Each time that Jim passed by that row of cabins, he looked at that horseshoe and read the sign. And once he had gone down by night just to see how the horseshoe would look in the pale light of the moon.

The sign was a queer one, and queerer than all else (for it was a “danky” sign), it was correctly spelled and properly punctuated:

JEDEDIAH, the PROPHET: DOCTOR and FORTUNE TELLER.
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Besides the pride that Jim took in his absence of superstition, was a modest pride in his education. This man who united the high office of “Doctor” and “Fortune Teller” was evidently a learned individual, for could he not spell “prophet”? and prophet was a hard word. Indeed, few white folks could spell it right. Jim would have bet on that.

One day Jim got a glimpse of the Prophet, at least he

thought it must be the Prophet. The great man was out back of his cabin, sitting astride of a bench with a draw-shave in hand, making axe helves. Jim was disappointed in his looks, for this man was small and round-shouldered, and nearly white, whereas a sure-enough prophet should be large and very black, or else all white with a beard that reached his waist.

On going closer to the pickets and peeking through, Jim saw that the Prophet was old; and that surely was in his favor. But, as he turned his wrinkled face, Jim was startled to see that, like himself, the man wore a close-cropped beard, grizzly, red and white, and his face was freckled. Jim trembled a little and pinched himself to see if he were awake; he felt someway that he was looking at a picture of himself as he would appear when he got old. As yet, of course he was only a youth, a wild, giddy, reckless youth, sowing a small crop of wild oats.

Their eyes met:

"Come in, sah, come in, it 's a fine day, sah," called the old man in the pleasant accent of the Southern negro.

Jim opened the gate and walked in.

"Take a seat, sah! Sunflowah, a cheer for the gemmen! Doan you stand thar starin' as if we was n't used to white folks!"

An old mulatto woman brought out a splint-bottomed chair, and dusting it with her apron placed it in the shade against the cabin.

"We 've saw you go by, sah, sev'ral times, an' ha! ha! ha! ha! we laughed to see how much you looks like my ole man tharust to look fore he got the rumatize, ha! ha! ha!"

"Go 'bout yo' work, woman," ordered the Prophet in a voice of wrath.

The Prophet's wrath was feigned, but Jim was mad in earnest.

"I 'm no nigger!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, you be, sah! but you no better dan white folks on dat 'count. I 'm no niggah either, I 'm white. I am!" chuckled the old man.

"So you are white an' I 'm a nigger, is that it?"

"Yes, dat 's a fack!" and the old man laughed again.

"I 'd thrash you, old fool, if you was younger!"

"Go 'way chile—go 'way—how ol' you think I am?"

The easy way the old man was taking things side-tracked Jim's wrath by piquing his curiosity. He dropped into the chair, leaned back, and thinking to humor the old man answered:

"Oh, eighty!"

"Go way—I 'm not seventy-five, and you, re near sixty."

Jim felt that he was in the presence of a man just a little smarter than himself. The guess at his age was so near the truth that it stung, especially in view of the fact that Jim had insisted for years that he was forty-two and no more.

"Oho, so you 're a prophet, are you?"

"Yes, I 'm a prophet. You folks down dar be on no good errand!"

"Who do you mean, you old rascal?"

"You, at dat Kennedy farm!"

"Why?"

"First comes John Smith an' his sons, then more sons, an' then more. Now fully twenty sons!"

"We 're hunting for gold in the mountains."

"Is you though!"

"Yes, you 're a prophet, will we find it?"

"Less see your han', man."

Jim reached his hand forward and the Prophet studied it carefully, mumbling to himself.

"No, you won't find no gold—you might if I 'd consult de Spirits for you an' show where it am. Bring yo' Massa' down, an' for five dollars—good money—I 'll work de spell!"

"Who shall I bring, did you say?"

"De man what owns you."

"Fool, no man owns me, but I 'll bring Mr. Smith to see you."

"All right—an' so you is free, is you?"

"Yes."

"An' dem other niggers at your house—is dey free?"

"Of course, Mr. Smith does not believe in slav'ry—it 's wrong."

"Lordy, I wish you 'd convince my Massa' ob dat fact, I do!"

"Well, pos'bly we will."

Jim could fight on a square deal, where his enemy stood out in open; in short, he was not afraid of anything that could be seen, but the Unknown made him tremble. This old Prophet was a Voudou, and Jim felt a little in awe of him; he had a wholesome respect for the Powers of the Air with which this Prophet was in league. These Powers had brought people good luck and they had brought them bad luck. He knew this—he had known of men to fall down in a fit through charms worked over them by a Voudou.

If an enemy was after you, the Voudou could confound him; was your wife estranged, the Voudou could bring her back; was luck against you, the Voudou could reverse the spell and bring fortune your way.

But John Brown had no faith in Voudouism. He scoffed it; he prayed only to one God and had no faith

in the special influence of any one man or woman—all men were equal before the Almighty. And as to all this, Jim was sure that John Brown was wrong; but alas! Brown could not be reasoned with.

And more 's the pity, for, by the help of the Powers, that ammunition would have gotten through on time. Now there was a rasping delay—the men were getting restless. And worse, the slave-holders might have their suspicions aroused and prepare for defense.

Jim took a big chew of tobacco and went trudging off home, with the inward avowal that he would have nothing to do with the miserable Voudou Doctor. The man might be a rascal and work a spell that would bring ruin on them all; such men were dangerous.

But, after walking a couple of miles farther, it came over him that a man who was himself a slave would surely be very glad to have all the slaves free. Now if this Prophet had power to do certain wonderful things, would he not be glad to use this power in helping bring about his own freedom?

It must be so, and Jim wished that someone would have kicked him for being so stupid as not to have seen this point before.

This Voudou Prophet could work a Spell that would bring good luck to their project. Every force possible must be brought to bear to bring about the desired result: had Brown not said it again and again?

Jim ground his teeth in impatient rage to think that Brown was not here so he could ask his permission to make a confidant of the Prophet and thus secure his help. Brown had been gone three days. In a week he would be back.

But a week passed and he had not returned.

Jim called on the Prophet and studied him quietly and

carefully, giving nothing away in words or manner. The Voodoo seemed like a man of ability.

Could he work a Spell that would bring success to a plan? Yes, he surely could, but he must know what the desired plan was.

Jim hesitated—he demanded a test before divulging a single detail.

The Prophet suddenly swung his hands up, clapped them together; his form stiffened, his eyes closed, he fell back in his chair as if dying. Suddenly he began to struggle, his words came as if from the grave.

“I see—I see the inside of that Kennedy house—it is filled with armed men—they have guns, and knives fastened on poles like spears—their leader’s name is not Smith—I must have his true name before I can go on—”

“Brown,” answered Jim; he would tell this much and no more.

The Prophet’s eyes opened with a jerk, his senses were coming back—but suddenly his head began to shake and he passed out again under the “Influence.”

“Brown—his name is Brown, born in Connecticut, moved to Ohio, then to Kansas, where he fought for Abolitionism and had to run away—and—and—”

The man’s head began to jerk, he sat up, his eyes opened, and he declared that he did not know a single word of what he had said.

“Has the ’fluence give you anything, sah?” he asked innocently.

Jim had noticed that while under the “Influence” the man talked with the force and accent of an educated man of the North, and when he was “himself,” he was simply an ignorant mulatto.

The test was astounding. Jim was convinced.

He moved his chair up close to the Prophet, and in a hurried whisper told him all, and begged for his co-operation. The Prophet gave a low whistle of wonderment.

“ You gwine to ’tack de Arsenal—to capture de armory at de Ferry ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ An’ when ? ”

“ As soon as Brown gits back an’ the ’munition comes.”

“ Judas Priest!! ”

“ Yes, will you work a Spell to give us luck ? ”

“ In course I will, is n’t I a slave ?—Come to me the night befo’ you begins, an’ I ’ll work the charm ! ”

“ An’ why not now ? ”

“ Can’t! must do it just before you start.”

“ You are sure you can give us luck ? ”

“ In course I can.”

“ Well, work a Spell so Brown will get the ’munition and get back quick ! ”

“ I ’ll do it ! ”

“ When ? ”

“ To-night at midnight.”

Jim handed him a dollar—all the money he had, and shook his hand in gratitude. The Prophet gave him a piece of snake-skin in which were wrapped three black beans. This snake-skin was tied at each end with the dried intestines of a bat. The charm was to be worn by Jim over the heart—pinned to his shirt. Just before the blow was struck, the charm was to be brought back, when the Prophet would bless it and this would make victory certain.

The next evening John Brown came. Three days later the ammunition arrived.

There was virtue in the charm.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PLANS HASTENED

ALL was now ready. Only one thing deterred; that was that the negroes in Canada, to the number of a thousand or more, had not received the supplies that Brown had shipped them. They did not want the blow to be struck until they were ready to march. The very day, aye! the very hour that the wires brought the words, they would cross into the United States and move southward like an avalanche, gaining in force as they swept forward; but they must have provisions. By October 27th they would be in perfect condition to move.

Brown wrote them that the blow would be struck on the night of the 26th inst.

It was now Sunday evening—the night of the 26th was still ten days away. It was ten o'clock and the men were all asleep on their straw beds in the upper rooms. The lights were out.

Old John Brown sat alone in the darkness, musing—he seldom went to bed until midnight—his system seemed to require but little sleep.

He arose, put on his hat, took a stout stick that stood in the corner, and moved softly out into the night. He wished to go alone into the woods and pray, as was his wont.

The rising October wind ran hissing through the swaying pine tops; it rose and fell, and died away, and then came back with renewed force and fury.

Dark clouds, with great outstretched wings like gigantic bats, chased each other across the sky. Only now and again for an instant could the moon be seen.

The wind increased, the clouds thickened and a few dashing rain drops fell. Brown had walked a quarter of

a mile down the road and now withdrew under the protecting boughs of a great low pine that stood by the roadside.

Muffled voices in low conversation could be heard coming up the road. Sheet-lightning shone out and revealed three men; one short and stooped; this one shuffled and limped in his walk as if old and infirm.

“Dar ’s no haste—dey is n’t gwine to begin de fracas till a week yet, anyway!”

“But are you sure?”

“Dead sartain! Dar ’s only twenty men, all packed away like rats in a hole—jest bring up de Charlestown militia and bag de whole bizness some night, dat ’s de way.”

The three men passed on. Brown followed, but he was too far behind to catch their words, although as the lightning gleamed he saw that they were gesticulating and conversing earnestly. They ceased talking and cautiously approached the house. They moved slowly up to the windows and tried to peer in.

“Ah, good-evening, gentlemen!” came the firm, clear voice of old John Brown suddenly behind them.

The three men turned with a jump. They would have run, but Brown said, “I ’m glad to see you—neighbors, I s’pose?”

“Yes, sir, we was just goin’ by and thought we ’d make you a friendly visit.”

“I ’ll call my son to bring a light—”

“Oh, don’t trouble, we ’ll come over to-morrow—”

“No, but I wish to talk with you now.”

Brown opened the door and called, “Oliver, we have callers, bring a light!” He then moved around so as to stand between the visitors and the road.

It was only a moment before Oliver came down the stairs, half dressed, carrying a lighted candle.

“ Walk in, gentlemen, walk in ! ”

“ Oh, we ’d rather not to-night—some other time ! ”

“ Walk in, I say, I ’ve something important to tell you. ”

The two men stepped inside the door.

“ And that other man—the little man, where is he ? ”

“ Why, there were only two of us ! ”

“ Watson, take four of the boys and bring in that third visitor who is skulking outside—be quick or he ’ll get away ! ”

“ You ’re not going to kill us, neighbor, are you ? ” whined one of the men.

“ No, you shall not be harmed in the least. You are my prisoners, though ! ”

The men from up-stairs were all astir. They tumbled down the stairway, guns in hand, putting on clothing and buckling on belts as they came.

Brown turned to his men :

“ Boys ! the hour has arrived ! To-night we strike the blow—two prisoners are already ours ! ”

An involuntary cheer broke from the lips of the men who had been penned up for so many monotonous, weary days. Joy ! the hour had come ! Fight—fight, and victory was theirs !

Brown with a wave of his hand commanded silence.

“ Jim Slivers, handcuff these two gentlemen together ! I ’m sorry, but we will have to do it for safety. To-morrow you shall be exchanged for negroes, and go free. ”

“ Is they ’quainted ? ” said Jim with a grin and a leer, as he came forward and snapped a steel cuff around the wrist of each trembling man.

“ Jim Slivers, I think you have had more experience in night work than any man here—”

“ I ’ve cat’s eyes an’ can see in the dark.”

“ Can you go to Camp Brydges in two hours ? ”

“ Yes, or less ! ”

“ You have walked it by night ? ”

“ Four times—when the sky was blacker than black ! ”

“ Jim Slivers, it is now half past ten. If you reach Camp Brydges in three hours, it will do. Go to Colonel Brydges, and tell him that we are discovered and must strike the blow to-night. My force will march in an hour—his must move not later than four to reinforce us, all exactly as arranged ! ”

“ All as ’greed, ’cept he must move to-night—is that it ? ”

“ You understand it—this night we strike the blow ! ”

“ Good-bye, boys, I ’ll meet you all at the Arsenal for breckfuss—good-bye—I ’m off ! ”

A half-smothered cheer followed Jim as he disappeared through the door and the darkness swallowed him.

“ We can’t find that man, Father—are you sure there was another ? ” said Watson, entering the room.

“ Yes, there were three. Prisoner, who was that other man with you ? ”

“ A nigger, sir ! ”

“ You mean a colored man ! ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ I thought so—and was he a slave ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ And how comes it he knew of our plans to free the slaves ? ”

“ One of your men told him.”

“ What ! but never mind, it ’s too late now. And how came it that this slave should confide in you?—Speak up ! ”

“ We forced him—we saw your man talking to him, then we went to him and made him tell us ! ”

“ Now you see my men about you here—which one of these men revealed our secret ? ”

“ None of these here—it was the one you just sent away ! ”

“ And he gave our plans to a slave ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ And who else knows these plans save you two ? ”

“ No one but the nigger who told us ! ”

“ Well—well—you seem to speak the truth ; and if no one but a slave knows it, we are all right yet. The slave will side with us, that 's sure, when not intimidated by such as you. Never mind hunting for him, Watson, he got panic-stricken and crawled off in the grass. Boys, get ready for the fight ! ”

CHAPTER IX

THE BLOW IS STRUCK

TWO men were ordered to go with a lantern and hitch the horse to the wagon. The single, solitary old steed was led blinking and winking out into the darkness. Was ever before mortal horse bound on such momentous errand !

Haversacks, axes, a sledge, and a crowbar were piled into the wagon. The men had buckled on their cartridge belts, each containing forty rounds of ammunition. Each man carried a Sharpe's rifle, two pistols and a knife.

“ We are ready to start ! ” said John Brown. “ You will all kneel, while I ask the blessing of God on our undertaking. And will the two gentlemen who are providentially with us also kneel ? ”

All knelt, and John Brown offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the guidance that had thus far been given

them; he asked that the Spirit of Almighty God would still be with them.

A man was detailed to remain and guard the house and the two prisoners. At seven o'clock, this guard was to make for the hills to meet the main force at a point indicated.

Then John Brown climbed up into the wagon and drove slowly off down through the darkness toward the sleeping village.

The men dropped in behind, following silently, two by two. Not a word was spoken.

If they should meet persons on the way, it was the intent to capture them and send them back to the house, holding them prisoners. But the road was deserted—not a team nor man was to be seen.

Arriving at the village, two men were instructed to go ahead and pass down the two principal streets and extinguish the street lamps. Two others were sent to destroy the telegraph line.

As they approached, the river watchman that patrolled the bridge appeared. At the muzzle of a rifle, he was arrested. Three men were left to guard the bridge.

The rest of the company, with the prisoner, went with Brown at their head straight to the Arsenal. Around this long, brick building was a high iron fence. The gate was tried; it was locked. A sharp wrench with the crowbar and the lock was broken. They passed in and quietly seized the two watchmen, who were asleep.

By this time the two men, who had extinguished the street lamps, arrived with three policemen—the entire police force of the place—as prisoners.

Soon the men who had gone to cut the telegraph wires appeared with the station agent as a prisoner.

Ten of the men were now sent out by twos to bring

in certain prominent citizens, whose houses had been previously located.

By four o'clock they had returned, marching in front of them, in all, fourteen prisoners. There was no disorder—no confusion—not a shot had been fired on either side.

A passenger train had come in on the Maryland side at two o'clock. The switch had been turned and spiked. The men at the bridge ordered the passengers and trainmen to remain inside the cars on pain of death. Thinking that a large armed force had captured the town, they were willing enough to obey orders and lie quiet until daylight.

Day dawned, and Old Man Brown went across the bridge and had an interview with the conductor.

"I am here to free the slaves. The Abolitionists of the land have at last arisen, and in the name of God we declare all men free!" said Brown.

"And—and may we go on with this train?" asked the conductor.

"Yes, go! and carry the news to the City of Washington and to the world, that the blow which will make all slaves in America free has been struck. Go!"

The switch was quickly repaired. Brown walked across the bridge with the conductor to assure him that all was safe.

The train started, it moved faster, then faster, it was going with lightning speed for Washington, fifty-seven miles away.

Brown watched it disappear up the valley and grimly smiled.

Men began to appear on the streets—they were at once captured and marched inside the iron gates.

It was six o'clock and the town was terror-stricken.

People dared not look out of their houses; dreadful rumors were about; the North had marched upon them a force consisting of thousands of armed men. What would be the awful result? Who could say!

Soon there was firing in the streets. Some of the citizens had gotten out shotguns and rifles and were shooting at the Arsenal from long range.

Their shots were answered. Other shots were heard. It was Colonel Brydges with his first detachment.

“Get ready for the retreat! March all prisoners ahead! Should any try to escape, shoot!!” shouted John Brown.

To the huddled, trembling prisoners he made a speech, assuring them that none should be harmed, provided they did not resist or try to escape; they would all be exchanged within a few days for black men; there would be no insult nor ill treatment.

Off to the northeast could be seen a cloud of dust. Brown climbed to an upper window and scrutinized it carefully; it was the second detachment of Colonel Brydges’s force. In an hour they would be safely in the hills—leaving Virginia to recover from her fright as best she could, only to be terrified again.

The firing in the streets increased. Bullets began to break the windows.

It was seven by the town clock, and Brydges had not come.

Brown climbed again to the window and looked out for the cloud of dust. It was still there—but he was mistaken—it was not dust, it was only fog rising from the river.

A bullet struck and splintered the sash a foot from his face. He looked out across the street and saw a man firing from the windows of a warehouse. Suddenly, the

man who had shot at him stiffened, lunged and plunged through the window headlong to the stone sidewalk, pierced through the heart. One of Brown's men had located him.

They were all ready to march. Would Brydges never come ?

The crowd in the street increased. Men armed with every conceivable weapon were coming in from the country. They made a circle clear around the Arsenal, cutting off the two men who guarded the bridge. These two brave men had been pressed upon until their ammunition was gone—every moment they expected the force in the Arsenal would come marching out, or that Colonel Brydges would appear.

The force inside the iron gates did not come forth, and Colonel Brydges did not appear.

What was to be done !

Owen struck off alone, on the Maryland side, to meet Colonel Brydges. Watson and his comrade made a bold rush to reach the Arsenal. Watson fell, mortally wounded ; his companion, William Thompson, was captured, clutched and dragged by ravenous hands that sought to tear him limb from limb.

This gave the crowd courage and they surged closer. The firing increased.

Oh ! if only Brydges with his brave band should appear, how that mob would melt away. They would scatter like grasshoppers.

Brown could have charged the crowd and gotten away. But Watson was dead—he saw him fall—and Thompson a prisoner ! To retreat now meant leaving the prisoners behind. It would be too cumbersome to try to move them. Indeed, it would be an impossible feat

And to leave the prisoners behind meant failure—or at

least partial failure. But Brydges would come soon—then the work could be made complete, all as planned—save for poor Watson—alas! who would break the news to his wife?

But Brydges did not appear.

The flies came in swarms and covered the face of Watson where he lay all stark and bleeding out on the stony street.

The better to protect his men, Brown withdrew into the engine house, taking his prisoners with him. The doors were barricaded.

If a truce could be obtained for just an hour, the reinforcements would arrive! Brown sent Henry Thompson, his son-in-law, out with a white flag. Before Thompson had advanced ten feet he fell, pierced with a dozen bullets.

All that forenoon the crowd was kept at bay. The Militia Company from Charlestown—a hundred strong—dressed in shining uniform and well equipped, arrived. But they could do nothing—to charge meant death, to some at least.

A bullet struck Oliver as he stood at a port hole. He began to vomit blood and tried to speak—to give a message that should be sent to his young wife. He sank to the ground, and his old father, with rifle in one hand, felt the dying boy's pulse with the other.

Then he turned, took deliberate aim out through the port hole, fired and turning again closed the young man's eyes, for the boy was dead.

That evening a detachment of United States Marines arrived from Washington in charge of Col. Robert E. Lee. Lee demanded an unconditional surrender.

It was refused.

All that night the little force held out firm. Perhaps

Brydges had waited for night before coming to their rescue. Only six men were left, and two of these badly wounded.

At daylight, the Marines charged the place—battered in the doors and rushed in, sword in hand.

Old Man Brown fell, slashed and thrust through with swords and bayonets—his face a mass of blood—unrecognizable.

The plan had failed!

CHAPTER X

“ I AM READY ! ”

BUT the old man still breathed. The mob gathered about and sought to finish him, but a strong voice from someone in the crowd went up, “ Leave him alone, boys, don’t you see he is dying, anyway ? ” And the same unknown man placed an old coat under the gray head for a pillow, seeking to stop the gaping wounds, and standing by, he protected the helpless form from those who would have trampled upon it.

“ And what brought you here ? ” bawled a bystander, when it was seen that he was not dead.

“ Duty, sir,” came the answer.

“ And do you think it was your duty to invade this place with an armed force, and make war on your country ? ”

“ They tell me I am dying, sir, I cannot argue with you ; I tried to free the slaves, and am sorry I did not succeed. I did my duty as I saw it.”

Life still lingered in that iron frame, and in a blanket the old man was carried to prison.

Governor Wise arrived the next day, and when the

aristocratic Virginian met Old Brown of Osawatomic, he recognized at once that he was in the presence of one greater than himself. Governor Wise, who it seems had the elements of nobility in his make-up to a rare degree, has given us an account of that interview :

“ He is no madman, but the best bundle of nerves I ever saw ; cut, bruised and battered, and chained beside, he showed himself to be a man of courage and fortitude. He is a fanatic, of course, beyond all reason, but he thinks himself a Christian, and believes honestly he is called of God to free the negroes. They say when one son was dead by his side, he held his rifle in one hand, and felt the pulse of another who was dying, all the time cautioning his men to be cool and sell their lives dearly.

“ While I was talking with him,” continued Governor Wise, “ someone called out that he was a robber and a murderer. Brown replied, ‘ You slave-holders are the robbers.’ I said to him, ‘ Captain Brown, your hair is matted with blood, and you are speaking hard words. Perhaps you forget I am a slave-holder ; you had better be thinking on eternity. Your wounds may be fatal, and if they are not, you will have to stand trial for treason, conspiracy and murder, and how can you hope to escape, when you admit your guilt ? ’

“ The old man leaned on his elbow, and beneath the bandages on his broken face I saw the blue eyes flash, and he answered me : ‘ Governor Wise, you call me old, but after all I have only ten or fifteen years, at most, the start of you in that journey to eternity, of which you speak. I will leave this world first, but you must follow. I will meet you across Death’s border, and I tell you, Governor Wise, prepare for eternity. You admit you are a slave-holder. You have a responsibility weightier than mine. Prepare to meet your God ! ’ ”

Forty-one days passed. The physician reported to the

authorities that the prisoner's wounds were partially healed.

John Brown wrote to Margaret Brydges: "I am happy, happier than ever before in my life. I die to-morrow, and my only regret is that in this life I cannot repay you even in part for all you have done for me. Farewell!"

The morrow came with cloudless sky—a splendid southern winter day. The blue hills stretched off in every direction, with woods upon woods, and lazily ran the great placid river between.

The prisoner, still heavily chained, was helped into a wagon. Surrounded by an armed force of over two thousand men, with cavalry and loaded cannon, the line of march was taken up for the place of execution, two miles away.

The old man refused aid in getting out of the wagon, and walking up to the gallows steps, the strength of his youth seemed to have returned. He looked up at the sky, at the sun in the heavens, at the rolling river and the miles upon miles of woods. His lips moved for a moment in prayer; and then he said to the guards:

"I am ready!"

THE END.

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